

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 11 October 2016

Time: 2.00pm – 4.55pm

Present: Councillors J Whitehead (Chairwoman), D Brown (Vice Chairman), D Divine, S Frost, Z Moghadas, L Nethsingha, S Taylor, J Wisson and F Yeulett (substituting for Councillor D Harty)

R Beeson and F Vettese

Apologies: Councillors D Harty (substituted by Councillor Yeulett) and M Loynes.

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

204. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were noted as recorded above. There were no declarations of interest.

The Chairwoman advised the Committee of her intention to vary the order of business from the published agenda in order to discuss the items on the Looked After Children Strategy Progress Report and Children's Centres Service Delivery and Proposed Future Developments 2017/18 before the item on Business Planning.

205. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2016 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman. The Action Log was noted.

206. CO-OPTION OF DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES

The Committee noted the requirement for local authority committees dealing with education matters to include Diocesan representatives as non-elected members. Diocesan representatives were entitled to speak on any matters and to vote on matters relating to the Council's education function.

It was resolved to welcome and co-opt the following Diocesan representatives to the Committee:

- Rachel Beeson, Deputy Director of Education, the Church of England Diocese of Ely;
- Flavio Vettese, Deputy Director, the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia.

KEY DECISION

207. RE-TENDERING OF DATA CABLING AND ICT INSTALLATIONS CONTRACT

The Committee received a report by the Director of Learning seeking approval for the Education ICT Service to re-tender the computer networking data cabling and ICT installations.

The Committee noted that the Education ICT service was the principal agency for delivering Cambridgeshire's ICT strategy for schools. Many of the solutions offered by the ICT Service required data cabling to facilitate network conductivity and it was proposed to appoint a contractor to fulfil this requirement. The ICT Service was seeking a sole supplier contract to enable it to be competitive within the market place and to reduce customer waiting times. The successful bidder might be required to provide some networking equipment, but there would be no obligation for the Council to purchase equipment from the successful bidder. The estimated total value of the contract was £2.7m across the lifespan of the contract, making it a Key Decision.

Members noted that current annual spend of around £600k generated a surplus of around £65k which represented a significant income stream to the ICT Service without any risk to the Council.

It was resolved to;

1. Approve the ICT Service to re-tender the computer networking data cabling and ICT installation contract. The ICT Service could award the contract to the successful bidder for a period of 3+1 years.

DECISIONS

208. CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY 2016-18

The Committee received a report by the Director of Learning seeking comments on the final draft of the Local Authority's Strategy for School Improvement.

The Committee noted that there had been a steady improvement in overall educational performance in the county. The percentage of good and outstanding primary schools had risen to its highest ever total of 83.6% whilst the percentage of secondary schools judged good or outstanding had recovered from 46% in 2014-15 to 63.3% in 2015-16 with a rising trend. The achievement levels of the most vulnerable groups had also improved over the same period.

It was proposed to retain three priorities contained in the 2014-16 strategy and add two further priorities in order to:

- Improve phonics and writing in Key Stage 1 and maths in Key Stage 2;
- Secure suitable and sufficient early years, childcare, state-funded school and post-16 places to meet the needs of Cambridgeshire's children, young people and families.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Recruitment and Retention (page 5 of the draft): Members noted the impact of Cambridgeshire being one of the lowest funded local authorities for education on the county's ability to recruit and retain teachers and asked that a reference to this funding issue should be included in the report;
- School Improvement Priorities (page 12 of the draft): It was agreed to revise the section relating to traded services to show that this would not necessarily relate solely to primary schools and that this issue was under review;
- Monitoring (page 16 of the draft): All academies were offered an annual performance review and monitoring was on-going through the Local Authority's wider engagement with them through discussions and services provided. Experience so far suggested that most academies were happy to have an annual performance review conducted and to date none had refused the offer. Any safeguarding concerns would be referred to the Local Authority via Ofsted. It was agreed to amend the draft to make clear that monitoring was an on-going process;
- Appendix 5 (page 39 of the draft): Where a school was issued with a Warning Notice it would typically be required to submit an action plan to the Director of Learning within 10-15 days setting out how it intended to address the concerns raised. The school would be allocated a Local Authority School Advisor to support them during this period;
- Children with additional needs who did not have a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Education, Health and Care

Plan (EHCP) were considered one of the most vulnerable groups and were a priority. To date there was no conclusive evidence that obtaining places at academies for children with SEN was any more difficult than it had been in the past or than it is in maintained schools, but the situation was being monitored closely;

- Home to school transport: Detailed network analysis was being undertaken as part of the pilot Total Transport project to try to avoid unnecessarily long journeys to and from school and to try ensure that children and young people were not disadvantaged in their access to educational opportunities due to where they lived. It was agreed to include references to the commitments to maintain school transport for Post 16 financially disadvantaged families in last year's budget and to advise students about the availability of bursaries;
- Geographical variations: It was agreed to include some geographical analysis of performance and the pressures faced in different parts of the county to reflect the diverse and varied nature of communities in Cambridgeshire.

(Action: Director of Learning. To revise the draft strategy to reflect the comments above)

It was resolved to:

1. Approve the draft Local Authority's Strategy for School Improvement 2016-18, subject to the amendments suggested by members and recorded above. The Director of Learning to circulate a revised draft to all members of the Committee which could be subject to further discussion at Spokes if required.

209. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report by the Interim Service Director for Children's Social Care providing an update on the Looked After Children (LAC) Strategy and associated savings proposals.

The report set out the steady and constant increase in the number of LAC both in Cambridgeshire and the country as a whole since 2012. Despite working closely with colleagues in early help services to offer early intervention and support to families there had been a 22% increase in the number of children and young people becoming Looked After within Cambridgeshire during the previous two years. A review of the county's foster care service was underway with a view to increasing the number of places available, but some use of independent fostering agencies was currently needed in order to meet the demand for places.

Previous savings targets had been based on the assumption of reducing numbers of LAC over time, but officers' view now was that the higher level of demand currently being experienced would be sustained.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The Vice Chairman thanked officers for their work on reducing unit costs. The collective decisions taken on the budget had now been proved overly optimistic and the Committee would need to make a strong case to the General Purposes Committee for additional funding for the LAC budget;
- Pressures within families arising from mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependency, domestic abuse and financial difficulties were of particular relevance;
- The cost of supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) were reclaimed from central government via grant, but the County still needed to identify places for them;
- Variations in the numbers of LAC in different parts of the county. Some of this related to economic pressures and deprivation in particular areas whilst the lack of wider family support networks could also be significant. The need to be more impactful around intervention was recognised and there was an increasing emphasis on working alongside families for longer periods rather than intervening only at times of particular difficulty;
- The increase in the number of referrals from families on new housing developments who might be struggling to access traditional support networks or to engage with their new environment;
- Emergency care admissions tended to be placed with independent providers due to availability issues. This was being partly addressed by working more closely with families to try to reduce the number of emergency admissions, but it was not possible to avoid such situations completely;
- Children and young people placed with independent foster carers were generally moved to a local authority carer as quickly as possible, unless it was deemed in their best interests to remain where they were;
- The Council recognised and greatly valued the fantastic work done by local foster carers and was actively seeking to attract new foster carers as part of the wider Children's Change programme. The importance of the total support package offered to foster carers was noted;
- Members commented that they had been very impressed by the Looked After Children they knew and had met in the course of their duties.

The Chairwoman noted that the pressure on the LAC budget was currently estimated at around £3-4m per year. The care for LAC was a statutory responsibility and she emphasised the importance of having a realistic figure for this pressure going forward when taking proposals to the General Purposes Committee for consideration. She asked that further work be done to provide as accurate a figure as possible in advance of that meeting.

(Action: Interim Service Director for Children's Social Care)

It was resolved to:

1. Note the identified pressures in the placements budget and the associated savings proposals and agree that these needed to be addressed through the wider business planning process;
2. Go forward with the Committee's strongest support to achieve a realistic budget for Looked After Children.

210. CHILDREN'S CENTRE SERVICE DELIVERY AND PROPOSED FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN 2017-18

The Committee received a report from the Service Director Enhanced and Preventative Services and the Head of Family Work (Early Help) containing proposals for the future structure and service delivery of Children's Centres from 2017-18.

Children's Centres were originally designed to deliver a range of both universal and targeted health and education services to pre-school children and their families. Changes to the delivery of nursery education and initiatives such as the Children's Change Programme, the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme and the development of Community Hubs had created a need to review the future shape and focus of Children's Centres going forward.

The following points were made in discussion:

- The restructuring of the Children's Centre offer was part of the wider Children's Change programme which was seeking to reduce duplication of provision whilst delivering a more integrated service in collaboration with health and community and voluntary sector providers;
- Officers had approached the review with a view to identifying an optimum service delivery model;
- Members described the value placed on the work carried out in Children's Centres by local residents and noted the important role they played in maintaining contact and support for families in the period between maternity services and the transition to school;

- Some members questioned whether the proposed reduction within the Children's Centre workforce of the equivalent of 32 full time members of staff might give rise to increased costs in subsequent years and pressures on other budgets and services, including within the healthcare and voluntary sectors. Members requested that further information on the impact of the proposed staffing reductions going forward be provided in advance of final budget decisions being taken ;
- Members questioned how many Community Hubs were planned and where these would be located;
- Members asked whether any Children's Centres would be closed and if so which ones.

Summing up the discussion the Chairwoman noted that the County Council had maintained the level of services in existing Children's Centres and was looking to extend the range of services offered alongside public health and voluntary sector partners. The key issue was ensuring that preventative services remained accessible to all; if that also delivered savings it would be of obvious benefit, but it was not the motivation for the proposed changes. The Committee did not want to create a pared down service which could lead to difficulties and financial pressures in the future.

It was resolved to:

1. Note and agree the alignment of Children's Centre work in the wider Children's Change Programme with a view to realising savings;
2. Note the alignment with the potential development of Community Hubs and the contribution which will be made by Children's Centres to this transformed way of working;
3. Note the links to the Healthy Child Programme and the need to consider how decision making can be aligned across Committees;
4. Ask that more detail on the precise nature of where potential reductions would fall, both in terms of buildings and staff, be brought back to a future meeting before any budget decisions were made.

(Action: Service Director Enhanced and Preventative Services)

211. BUSINESS PLANNING

The Committee received a report presented by the Head of Strategy in Children, Families and Adult (CFA) Services providing an overview of the draft Business Plan Revenue Proposals within CFA which were within the Committee's remit. In contrast to previous years where budget planning had been based on cash limits within individual directorates there was now

a more holistic approach to business planning across the Council as a whole.

The following points were raised in discussions:

Section 2: Building the Revenue Budget

- Section 2.6: Members felt that it would be helpful to make it more clear that the zero figures in the table indicated that no pressures existed which could not be absorbed within the budget rather than suggesting a zero budget;

Section 3: Summary of the Draft Revenue Budget

- Members noted that savings or additional income of £99m was required over the five years from 2017-18 in order to balance the Council's budget in the light of identified cost increases and reduced Government funding;
- The Chairwoman noted that an assumption of a 0% Council Tax increase was built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy and raised the question of whether the County could afford another year of no increase in Council Tax;

Section 6: Looked After Children (LAC)

- Some savings had been delivered in-year on the Looked After Children placement budget which had helped minimise the overspend on this area;
- Members questioned whether any areas would lend themselves to spend to save investment;
- The pathways to access contraception and sexual health services for priority groups and the SPACE Programme designed to help mothers prevent the repeat removal of children into care were highlighted as long-term strategies which might deliver savings as well as supporting individuals and families;
- Cllr S Taylor asked for further detail on the SPACE Programme to be provided outside of the meeting;

(Action: Director of Strategy and Commissioning)

- The Chairwoman said that the Committee was generally content for Section 6 to go forward subject to the comments recorded above and at Minute 209 and noted that more detail would come back to the Committee in future business planning papers;

Section 7: Children's Change Programme

- Members highlighted an increase of 28.2% in Child Protection activity and 117% across Looked After Children (LAC) activity between April 2013 and July 2016;
- Proposals coming forward would include the merging and streamlining of senior and team management posts which would offers savings of around £525k. The Chairwoman emphasised that

consultation with staff in relation to the resulting redundancies was critical;

- There was no anticipated reduction in front line delivery or support;
- The Chairwoman noted that more detailed proposals on this area would be considered at the Committee's November meeting. Some hard choices would need to be made and Members would want to see sufficient detail to fully inform their decisions;

Section 9: Strategic Review of the Local Authority's On-going Statutory Role in Learning

- Paragraph 9.3 to be revised to make clear that the Education Adviser role would be discharged by two full time equivalent staff, one funded centrally and one funded through traded services;

(Action: Director of Learning)

Section 10: Other Transformation and Savings Proposals

- Following the success of the Total Transport pilot project in Ely work was underway to produce transformation invest to save proposals to roll out the project county-wide for mainstream pupils;
- An error in paragraph 10.8 in relation to independent travel training for children with special educational needs was corrected as follows: 'Once trained and assessed to be safely able to travel independently ~~there will no longer be a requirement to provide home to school transport~~ each young person will be eligible for a National Concessionary bus pass which will entitle them to free travel (after 9.30am).'

Section 13.5: Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

- Some members expressed concern at the level of risk contained within the proposals and described at paragraph 13.8.

(Action: Head Of Strategy CFA to reflect Members comments in the next round of Business Planning papers)

The Chairwoman said that the Committee would await a further paper at the next meeting reflecting the discussion before final decisions were made.

It was resolved to:

1. Note the overview and context provided for the 2017/18 to 2021/22 Business Plan revenue proposals for the Service;
2. Comment on the draft revenue savings proposals that were within the remit of the Children and Young People Committee for 2017/18 to 2021/22.

212. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT AUGUST 2016

The Committee considered a report by the Strategic Finance Manager providing an update on the finance and performance position for Children, Families and Adult Services (CFA) at the end of August 2016.

Members noted:

- CFA Services was forecasting an overspend of £2521k at the end of August which represented a worsening position from the end of July when an overspend of £693k had been forecast;
- A detailed report on the catering and cleaning service would be submitted to the Committee's November meeting for consideration;
- The pressures on the Children's Social Care budget would be picked up as part of the work on the Children's Change Programme;
- Officers were looking across CFA to align projected overspends and underspends to minimise the total projected overspend.

It was resolved to:

1. Review and comment on the report.

213. AGENDA PLAN, APPOINTMENTS AND COMMITTEE TRAINING PLAN 2016-17

The Committee reviewed the Forward Agenda Plan for the Children and Young People Service Committee which was published on 1 October 2016.

It was resolved to:

1. Amend the Agenda Plan as follows:
 - The Local Authority's Role in Education (moved from November to December)
 - Foster Carer Allowances (moved from November to January)
2. Note one vacancy on the Child Poverty Champions Group;
3. Note the Committee Training Plan 2016/17.

214. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee resolved to meet next on Tuesday 8 November 2016 at 2.00pm in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairwoman

