

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday 5 December 2017

**Time:** 2.00pm – 5.35pm

**Present:** Councillors S Bywater (Chairman), S Hoy (Vice Chairwoman) – until 4.45pm, A Bradnam, P Downes – until 5.20pm, L Every, A Hay – until 5.10pm, M Howell (substituting for J Wisson), S Taylor, D Wells and J Whitehead

Co-opted member A Read

**Apologies:** Councillor J Wisson (substituted by M Howell)  
Co-opted member F Vettese

### **CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

#### **62. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming Councillor Bradnam as a newly appointed member of the Children and Young People (CYP) Committee. He paid tribute to her predecessor Councillor Nethsingha who had served on CYP on two occasions and had been one of the Members first appointed when the Committee was established in May 2014. Councillor Nethsingha would remain a substitute member of the Committee and the Chairman welcomed her continued involvement in its work.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the appointment of Councillor A Bradnam as a member of the Committee in succession to Councillor L Nethsingha. Councillor Nethsingha would remain a substitute member of the Committee.

#### **63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies were received from Councillor J Wisson, substituted by Councillor M Howell, and co-opted member F Vettese.

A declaration of interest was made by Councillor L Every in relation to Item 5: Capital Investment for Sawtry Village Academy as a former employee of Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT) and currently a Governor at another academy sponsored by CMAT. Councillor Every had sought advice from Democratic Services on her participation in the meeting and had been advised that there was no reason she should not be present and vote.

A declaration of interest was made during Item 9: Free School Proposals by co-opted member A Read as a Trustee of two of the schools mentioned in the report.

#### **63. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 14 NOVEMBER 2017 AND ACTION LOG**

The minutes of the meeting on 14 November 2017 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman. The Action Log was noted.

## **65. PETITIONS**

No petitions were received.

## **DECISION**

## **66. CAPITAL INVESTMENT FOR SAWTRY VILLAGE ACADEMY**

The Chairman stated that he was pleased to see so many members of the public present to listen to the debate on this item. As the local member for Sawtry he was aware of how important this issue was to local residents and so he had asked the Vice Chairwoman to take the Chair for this item to allow him to speak in his capacity as the local member and fully represent their views.

The Director of Learning stated that officers were recommending a one-off capital investment in Sawtry Village Academy (SVA) to address serious health and safety issues arising from the exceptional circumstances which had arisen. The former principal and vice principal had engaged in deceitful, devious and criminal activity over a sustained period. Officers were certain that their failures in leadership had contributed in a major way to the sub-standard condition of the school buildings. The Local Authority was not funded to meet the condition needs of academies. However, the Council was responsible for the health, safety and well-being of all children and had an important role in championing their needs. It was also acknowledged that the failings in leadership and the decline in quality of the school buildings had begun before the school became an academy. On the basis of these wholly exceptional circumstances officers recommended that the local authority should make a contribution of £2 million capital funding to the first phase of SVA's redevelopment programme and support the Academy's petition to the Department for Education (DfE) and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for funding to enable Phases One and Two of the re-development to begin simultaneously.

The Vice Chairwoman had accepted three requests to speak on this item from members of the public. She invited Dee Pike, a parent and Academy Council member, to address the Committee. Ms Pike described in detail the poor condition of the school buildings which had developed during the tenure of the previous principal. The arrival of the new principal, senior leadership team and Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT) saw a number of emergency health and safety needs addressed and parents and staff had worked together to carry out additional works such as re-painting classrooms and gardening in the grounds to help improve the learning environment. During this period GCSE grades rose by 14% and the sixth form excelled, but the stigma of the actions of the former principal continued to cast a shadow over the school. Despite the commitment of the new leadership team, staff, parents and students the overall condition of the school remained poor and the scale of remedial work required was beyond that which CMAT could deliver alone. The support of the Council in helping fund the improvements needed would boost morale and enable the school to expand its community involvement and remain a central part of village life.

The Chairwoman thanked Ms Pike for her comments and invited George Lankfer to address the Committee in his capacity as a student at SVA. Mr Lankfer described the notable absence of the previous principal from school life and the sense that he did not care about the school or students. In contrast, the new principal and CMAT were demonstrating clear and visible leadership and he now felt proud of the school and how

things were being turned around. However, the condition of the buildings remained poor and he felt that the lack of equipment had impacted negatively on his GCSE results. A new building would solve the practical problems being faced by the school community. It would also demonstrate that whilst one person could ruin a school, a community working together could restore it. He had done lots of fundraising and, although it was his last year at the school, he remained committed to securing its future.

The Chairwoman invited any questions of clarification from the Committee. The following comments were offered by in response to Mr Lankfer's address:

- A Member commended his eloquence in speaking without notes and from the heart. They noted with regret the impact which he felt poor equipment had had on his exam results;
- A Member commended his contribution for being clear, concise and articulate and asked whether there was a student council at the school as this was important for student involvement. Mr Lankfer confirmed that there was a school council at SVA and that membership was drawn by lot.

The Vice Chairwoman invited Mark Woods, Chief Executive of CMAT to address the Committee. Mr Woods expressed his thanks to students, parents and staff for their support in exceptionally difficult circumstances. He paid particular tribute to the new principal, Sarah Wilson, who had led the school to achieve a place in the top ten schools in the county for exam results and on its outstanding sixth form provision. He highlighted CMAT's on-going financial commitment to the school, including providing emergency funding to address fire safety concerns which would otherwise have led to the school's closure. The ESFA had not yet recognised the exceptional circumstances at SVA, but with the Council's support Phase One of the re-development work could start within days. Such support would be gratefully received by the whole school community.

The Chairwoman invited any questions of clarification from the Committee:

- Two Members commented that they were puzzled that no teachers or governors had raised concerns about the standard of the school accommodation before matters were brought to a head by the failed Ofsted inspection in June 2014, given that this appeared to be a long-standing issue. The Chairman stated that he would cover this issue when he addressed the Committee in his capacity as the local member.

The Vice Chairwoman invited Councillor Bywater to address the Committee in his capacity as the local member. Councillor Bywater stated that it had been a long and difficult journey between the time allegations of wrongdoing first came to light and the criminal convictions of the former principal and vice principal. He commended the new principal of SVA, Sarah Wilson, on how she had conducted herself during this difficult period. The judge at the former principal's trial had noted that he had created an atmosphere of intimidation and bullying which had made people afraid to challenge him. In person he had appeared articulate and persuasive and the former chair of governors had been manipulated by him. The community of Sawtry was devastated by the condition of the school buildings and it appeared that numerous opportunities over the years to attract investment and grant funding had been missed. The situation was compounded by fire safety failures which had necessitated CMAT investing around £600,000 to avoid immediate closure. The school was located in the centre of the community and was a real focus of village life. He thanked the three public speakers

and other members of the public who had come along to the meeting to show their support for the school and called on the Committee to offer its support to SVA in the light of the wholly exceptional circumstances.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions from Members:

- A Member sought clarification of Phase One of the project. With the permission of the Vice Chairwoman, Mark Woods stated that Phase One would see two old blocks removed and replaced with a new teaching block with eighteen classrooms at a cost of £3.5 million. Refurbishment of the remaining buildings would then continue over time. The final result would be a school of roughly the same size as at present;
- SVA was currently losing around 50-80 students per year;
- A Member commented that it was an extraordinarily upsetting situation for the students, staff and local community. They commended the remedial work being carried out by CMAT and the new principal and stated that they would be wholeheartedly supporting the recommendations;
- A Member questioned whether the £2 million capital funding contribution recommended by officers was sufficient. The Chairman stated that there was a need to be realistic about the sum which the local authority could afford to contribute in the context of the wider budgetary pressures it faced and emphasised that a partnership approach was being advocated across CMAT, the ESFA and the local authority;
- Several Members emphasised the importance of robust oversight and governance arrangements to hold head teachers and senior staff teams to account and to avoid anything similar happening again. As part of this it would be important to understand how somebody could get away with such exceptional irregularities over an extended period. Members welcomed news that the Executive Director for People and Communities would be investigating what had happened at SVA to ensure that lessons were learned in relation to the failures of the governance system and that a clear whistle-blowing system was in place for the future. They were keen that her findings should be reported to the Committee at the earliest opportunity; (**Action:** Executive Director, People and Communities);
- A Member commented that lessons also needed to be learned by the Regional Schools Commissioner and the National Schools Commissioner about how an unscrupulous individual could exploit the gap between the Department for Education and academies. Officers noted that the local authority did retain powers of investigation and intervention in academies in relation to safeguarding and keeping students safe from harm;
- A Member commented that local authorities had no powers to intervene in the case of academies whose academic performance was poor, it could only encourage. They commented that a senior officer had written to all of the county's schools in the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster asking about the fire safety measures in place, but some had not replied and for non-maintained schools the Council had no power to insist. The Executive Director stated that she was committed to using her best endeavours in support of all of the schools within Cambridgeshire, maintained or otherwise, and to developing a close and productive working relationship with the new Regional Schools Commissioner;
- A Member commented that they had dealt with the school in a professional capacity during the former principal's tenure and the external perception of the school had been positive. With hindsight it was evident that visitors had been directed to those parts of the site in reasonable repair. Falling rolls had impacted on the budget and an extraordinary partnership approach was required to deliver the solution which the

students deserved. It was vital that Phases One and Two of the remedial works were carried out simultaneously, for which ESFA support was required;

- A Member emphasised that academies were not the responsibility of the local authority and that the Council was not funded to support them. The responsibility rested with a negligent governing body and the Secretary of State for Education to whom academies were accountable. In their view there was a clear lesson to be learned about the need for proper accountability for academies and academy chains. The Member was concerned that the Council should be seen as a source of funding when academies found themselves in financial difficulty and questioned where the £2 million would be found.

Officers emphasised the exceptional nature of the situation in Sawtry which they felt did not set a wider precedent for the Council providing capital funding to academies. It is understood that there is evidence that the former principal's deception had begun whilst SVA was under local authority control. The inherent flexibility of capital projects meant that it would be possible to contribute to the Sawtry proposals without impacting adversely on other capital projects.

- A Member questioned how officers had arrived at the recommended figure of a £2 million contribution. Officers stated that CMAT could contribute £1.5 million so the additional £2 million proposed would allow Phase One of the project to proceed immediately;
- A Member questioned whether, if the recommendation was agreed, the local authority could seek reimbursement of its £2 million capital contribution from the Department of Education;
- A Member questioned why the severity of the situation had not been recognised whilst Sawtry was under local authority control. Officers stated that the condition of the school had been assessed in 2008 as part of a wider review and had been placed seventeenth out of forty seven schools, demonstrating that at that time the condition was not a cause for unusual concern. However, older buildings were known to deteriorate quickly if they were not properly maintained;
- A Member questioned what would happen if the ESFA did not agree to provide funding for Phase 2 of the project. With the permission of the Vice Chairwoman, Mark Woods stated that in this scenario CMAT would use the condition funding it received annually from the ESFA to gradually address the issues over time;
- A Member commented that they felt the situation at SVA represented both a safeguarding and a moral issue and that on this basis they would be supporting the recommendation.

The Vice Chairwoman stated that the Committee wished to send a strong message that a similar situation must not be allowed to happen again.

It was resolved by a majority to:

- a) allocate £2m capital funding as a contribution to Phase One of Sawtry Village Academy's redevelopment programme;

It was resolved unanimously to:

- b) support the Academy's petition to the Department for Education (DfE) and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for funding to enable Phases One and Two of the redevelopment programme to commence simultaneously;

- c) write separately to the Department for Education expressing the Committee's strong support for Sawtry Village Academy.

## **KEY DECISIONS**

### **67. ESTIMATING DEMAND FOR EDUCATION PROVISION ARISING FROM NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS (REVISION OF METHODOLOGY)**

Councillor Bywater resumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to an email sent by Councillor Ryan Fuller the previous day in his capacity as the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning at Huntingdonshire District Council. Councillor Fuller had requested that this decision be deferred pending further work. The email had been shared in full with all members of the Committee the previous day.

The Strategic Policy and Place Planning Manager stated that forecasting demand for school places in new and growing communities was managed through a complex and evidence-led process. The multipliers used were a key tool and it was vital that they were kept up to date and credible to inform negotiations with developers regarding Section 106 contributions or applications by the Council for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. This took place in advance of the discussions with district and city councils to which Councillor Fuller had referred. Detailed research and analysis demonstrated that the current multiplier for primary school places was too low and it was recommended that this was increased from the current figure of 25-35 primary age children per 100 dwellings to 30-40 per 100 dwellings. Variations were acknowledged in the number of children who might be expected in different types of developments.

The following points were noted in discussion of the report and in response to questions:

- Paragraph 2.8.2: A Member strongly endorsed the practice of using the top end of the range for calculating developer contributions where the housing mix was not yet known to ensure that the Council could meet its statutory obligations with regard to the provision of early years and school places;
- A Member noted the difficulties experienced in relation to place provision on the Loves Farm development and emphasised the need for accurate multipliers to avoid similar situations in future;
- A Member expressed concern about the cumulative impact of numerous small developments which did not attract Section 106 funding;
- A Member noted Councillor Fuller's concerns, but stated that the Council must ensure that its figures for the number of places needed were sound before beginning discussions with developers. On the basis of officers' assurance that the figures presented to the Committee were statistically correct they were content to support the recommendations;
- A Member commented that a meeting might be offered to Councillor Fuller to discuss his concerns;
- A Member noted the complex and technical nature of the issue and thanked officers for the training session on multipliers and place planning methodology which had been offered the previous week. They noted that only three Members had attended this training and asked that their disappointment that neither the Chair or Vice Chair were present be recorded. The Chairman stated that a number of Committee members, including himself, had attended a previous training session on this issue

and that the training materials had been circulated to all members and substitute members of the Committee for their information.

It was resolved to:

- a) comment on the matters raised in the report and note the changes to the identified requirements for primary places likely to result from applying the new multiplier;
- b) approve the adoption of the revised general multiplier for children in the 4-10 age range with immediate effect in order to better inform the planning and funding of primary education places.

## **68. SUPPORTED ACCOMODATION FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AGED 16-18**

The Service Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding stated that the current framework contract had a value of around £1.8 million. It was planned to develop new procurement arrangements in conjunction with Peterborough City Council to ensure consistency of approach across the area.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions from Members:

- A Member noted how upsetting it could be for a young person in foster care to learn that their placement would end when they were sixteen. Officers recognised the importance of ensuring that this should not come as a surprise and that the young person should be properly supported and prepared where this was the case. They offered to provide figures for the number of young people in this position;  
**(Action:** Service Director: Children' Services and Safeguarding)
- Most supported accommodation did not need to be registered with Ofsted as it was designed for more self-sufficient young people. Those requiring a higher level of support would remain in a children's home which would be registered with Ofsted;
- Paragraph 1.3: A Member noted that different average costs were given for young people in supported accommodation compared to unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) in supported accommodation. Officers undertook to provide an explanation for this difference:  
**(Action:** Service Director; Children's Services and Safeguarding)
- Paragraph 2.7: A Member stated that they were unclear about how it was proposed to provide the service at a lower cost. Officers stated that a joined-up approach across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would support better planning. The cost of spot purchasing emergency provision was high, so by meeting the majority of demand through contracted providers the unit cost would be lower;
- A Member commented on the repeated use of the word 'issues' rather than 'problems' and felt that it would be better to be clear about problems where they existed.

It was resolved:

- a) support the planned procurement activity and the strategic intentions with regard to providing these services.

## DECISIONS

### 69. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS FOR 2018-19 AND 2022-23

The Executive Director gave a presentation to provide context to the budget report and highlight key issues and trends. She stated that the rising demand for children's and adult services was a national problem. Historically, Cambridgeshire was one of the areas with the lowest levels of funding for children's and adult services and it also experienced particular challenges within the health economy. Population growth was a recognised pressure, but the complexity of need was also becoming more severe. The Council had delivered significant savings in recent years by transforming the way in which it worked in order to maintain or improve service levels whilst driving down costs. However, the success of these initiatives meant that there were now far fewer efficiencies left to be made to deliver further savings. A significant proportion of the children's and adult services budgets were demand-led which made them more difficult to control. The large sums dedicated to these services also meant that even small variations against forecasts could create significant financial pressures. Key issues within the children's services budget included:

- The cost of independent foster care or residential placements was roughly double that of in-house providers. Out of county placements also led to higher transport costs;
- In 2013 the rate of children in care per 10,000 in Cambridgeshire was below the county's statistical neighbours, but now it was significantly above. Officers were satisfied that threshold decisions for those coming into care were appropriate which suggested that children and young people were spending too long in the care system before moving on to permanent outcomes. An extensive diagnostic review had been commissioned to examine children's journeys through the care system with a view to minimising their time spent in care. However, the pressure would remain significant until at least the end of the next financial year;
- The number of Looked After Children had stabilised during the current financial year, but a pressure of £2.4 million was predicted by the end of 2017/18. Mitigations were being actively pursued including the No Wrong Door strategy and a weekly panel review of higher cost placements;
- The new People and Communities senior management structure which had been established across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough had reduced senior staff costs, improved the co-ordination and consistency of services and speeded up decision-making which was benefiting service users, both local authorities and their partner organisations;
- In 2017/18 there were £5.5 million of pressures across children's and adult services. Some of the mitigations identified would be one-off savings and, although the Transformation Fund was being used to pump prime further initiatives, the position remained one of significant challenge.

The following points arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions from Members:

- The diagnostic review of children's journey through the care system would be conducted by external consultants at a cost of £70,000 which had been agreed by

the General Purposes Committee. It would include lots of workshops and interaction with staff;

- A Member questioned whether it was possible to produce a balanced budget. The Executive Director highlighted the various mitigations identified in the report and her presentation, but emphasised that many of these would be one-off savings and would not address on-going pressures in future years. The Member noted that the Council had the option of increasing Council tax if Members chose and commented that they felt that the Committee should say that more investment was needed and be realistic that the budget might not be balanced;
- The cost of recruiting and supporting more in-house foster carers was recognised, but would be off-set in the longer term by the savings arising from reduced use of higher costs independent placements;
- A Member questioned whether the stabilisation of the number of Looked After Children was a blip or represented a wider trend. Officers stated that the diagnostic review would test this;
- A Member questioned whether there was a need to scale back the Council's ambition in order to ensure that it was able to meet its statutory obligations. The Executive Director gave an assurance that the budget would be managed to ensure that the Council's statutory obligations would be met;
- The Executive Director stated that both the 'Fairer Funding for Cambridgeshire' and 'Stand Up for Peterborough' campaigns were seeking to improve the levels of funding coming into the region and confirmed that learning and best practice was being shared across the two authorities;
- Paragraph 2.6: A Member noted that reductions in delayed transfer of care (DTCOs) was leading to an increase in costs relating to care packages;
- Paragraph 4.9: Officers confirmed that the 'payment by results' funding from central government did not have to be directly re-invested into work with troubled families, but could be used to fund wider initiatives. It was noted that not all families chose to engage with the support offered.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2018/19 to 2022/23 Business Plan revenue proposals for the Service, updated since the last report to the Committee in October;
- b) comment on the draft revenue savings proposals that are within the remit of the Children and Young People Committee for 2018/19 to 2022/23, and endorse them to the General Purposes Committee as part of consideration for the Council's overall Business Plan;
- c) comment on the changes to the capital programme that are within the remit of the Children and Young People Committee and endorse them to the General Purposes Committee as part of consideration for the Council's overall Business Plan.

## **70. FREE SCHOOL PROPOSALS**

During discussion of the report a declaration of interest was made by co-opted member Andrew Read as a Trustee of two of the schools mentioned in the report.

The Strategic and Policy Places Planning Manager provided an update on developments since publication of the report:

- St Bede's Inter-Church School: Officers had met with a representative of the Department for Education (DfE) and the headteacher of St Bede's. The DfE was committed to establishing the new school in Wisbech and St Bede's remained equally committed to a site in Waterbeach. Representatives of St Bede's would be meeting the Regional Schools Commissioner to discuss the matter further. There would be a basic need for an additional secondary school in Wisbech in 2020 so it was imperative to have a decision by the DfE by spring 2018 at the latest. The Vice Chairwoman noted that the Committee had agreed the need for an additional school in Wisbech the previous year and emphasised the pressing need to make progress;
- Godmanchester Secondary Academy: No site had been identified;
- The Cavendish Special School: Work was proceeding. The DfE's property arm was doing the building work and was on target to deliver the project on time;
- There was no indication yet from the DfE of an announcement of a Wave 13 application round so the Council would need to go out to competition if a new school was needed.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to Members' questions:

- A Member noted that no site had yet been identified for the St Neots Free School and asked when the pre-implementation period would expire. Officers thought this would possibly be at the end of the current Parliament in 2022. Officers had raised the difficulties created by this uncertainty with the Regional Schools Commissioner;
- A Member stated that it was a waste of capital funds and revenue caused by the DfE approving the establishment of new schools where there was no basic need;
- Members felt that it would be helpful to meet informally with the new Regional Schools Commissioner to share views and encourage collaborative working.  
(**Action:** Head of Service: 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation/ Democratic Services Officer)

It was resolved to:

- a) note the latest position regarding Wave 11 and Wave 12 free schools in Cambridgeshire.

## **71. PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL PRIMARY PLACES IN CHATTERIS**

The Area Education Officer described the difficulties experienced during the pre-implementation stage of the Active Learning Trust's (ALT's) application to establish a new free primary school in Chatteris which had led to the Trust withdrawing its application in October 2017. This meant that eighteen months had been lost in responding to place planning pressures in the town and this was already beginning to impact on existing schools. Three options had been identified to address the need for additional places with officers strongly recommending extending the age range of Cromwell Community College to 4-18 years.

In her capacity as the local Member for Chatteris Councillor Hay stated that Chatteris Town Council would be discussing the proposals the following evening. However, in advance of that meeting Councillor Hay and the Mayor of Chatteris had met with ALT representatives, the headteacher of Cromwell Community College and officers to

discuss the situation. They had been impressed by the proposals and by the ALT team and would be recommending them to the town council.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to Members' questions:

- The Chairman thanked officers for including a map of the site in the report which Members had found very helpful;
- A Member noted that, if approved, the decision to extend the age range of Cromwell Community College across the full 4-18 year range was a pragmatic decision based on the particular circumstances in this case and should not be regarded as a wider precedent for Council policy on the age range in its schools;
- A Member sought an assurance that the site design would ensure appropriate separation of the different age groups in the school. In particular the Member noted the need for a separate site entrance and playground facilities for the younger children which they saw as a safeguarding issue. Officers confirmed that these issues would be addressed in discussions with the provider and as part of the public consultation exercise.

It was resolved to:

- a) support the proposal being made by the Active Learning Trust (ALT) to provide the additional primary school places required by extending the age range of Cromwell Community College so that it becomes a 4-18 all-through school;
- b) authorise officers to submit a letter of support for ALT's proposal which will be submitted in the form of a business case to the office of the Regional Schools' Commissioner.

## **72. APPRENTICESHIPS**

The Senior Adviser for Curriculum, Teaching and Leadership briefed the Committee on the arrangements in place to encourage Cambridgeshire schools to take up apprenticeships following the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. Some interest had been shown in relation to posts such as teaching assistant, office assistant or digital technician and the possibility of sharing an apprentice across schools, but to date no maintained schools had taken on any apprentices under the new arrangements. The teaching apprenticeship was a new initiative and officers were working with schools to explore how this might work.

The following points arose in discussion of the report and in response to Members' questions:

- A Member commented that smaller maintained primary schools were required to contribute to the apprenticeship levy, but were not in a position to either employ or share an apprentice. This meant they were subject to a cost, but received no benefit. Officers confirmed that they would be working closely with schools to make sure that they were aware of all of the opportunities available to them, including employing an apprentice on a part-time or shared basis;
- Only training costs could be met from the apprenticeship levy; employers were still liable to meet the salary costs;
- Any funds not used within a certain period had to be returned to the Treasury so it was vital to maximise their use;

- A Member questioned whether the local authority could employ apprentices and loan them out to schools. Officers were asked to provide a briefing note to clarify whether this was possible. This should also state whether apprentices could be employed to carry out research projects and options for how the levy contribution from primary schools could be used;  
(**Action:** Senior Adviser: Curriculum, Teaching and Leadership)

It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the issues set out in the paper.

### **73. INVESTIGATING THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP**

The Chairman welcomed Andrew Day and Victoria Plutshack to the meeting. Andrew and Victoria were two of the three authors of the report before the Committee which had been produced as part of the Cambridge University Science and Policy Exchange (CUSPE) initiative. This collaboration had invited teams of researchers from the University of Cambridge to explore challenges faced by the County Council.

The Director of Learning stated that the gap in educational achievement in the county had been a persistent problem over time and was wider than that experienced in comparable local authorities, particularly in relation to students experiencing economic disadvantage and those with special educational needs. It had therefore been very pleasing that this had been one of the topics chosen for research under the CUSPE initiative.

The Chairman invited Councillor Manning to address the Committee on his involvement in the CUPSE initiative. Councillor Manning stated that the project had been initiated by the County Council in October 2016 as a means of building stronger links with the University of Cambridge and involving young researchers in exploring real policy challenges faced by the Council. Eight potential projects had been identified and shared with the research teams. A significant amount of work had gone into those projects which had been selected for research and they provided an independent perspective at no cost to the Council. It was hoped that a further round of projects might be considered future.

Mr Day and Ms Plutshack explained that their research had focussed on understanding why pupils in receipt of free school meals in more affluent schools had under-performed in comparison with their peers in less affluent schools in 2016. They had tested a number of hypotheses and evidence was found that schools in more affluent areas were spending pupil premium funds on different activities to those in less affluent areas. The research also identified an association between staff training, parental involvement and the use of generalised teaching assistants in better performing schools and recommended further research of these areas. The report recommended that consideration should be given to better collection of pupil premium data and the dissemination of best practice, including where examples of this were identified in otherwise poorly performing schools.

The Chairman thanked Mr Day, Ms Plutshack and their colleague Ms Zhang for their hard work and invited questions and comments from Members of the Committee:

- A Member commented that they had found the report very interesting and that they felt it would be good to take this forward within the local authority. The pupil premium appeared to be embedded within Government policy so it was worth establishing how best it could be used;

- A Member welcomed the report, but commented that it did not describe exactly what was being done differently in those schools which were performing best;
- A Member noted the lack of standardised data highlighted by the researchers and questioned whether this could be addressed at least in relation to maintained schools to provide a more coherent data set in future years. Officers confirmed that they were supportive of this proposal, but emphasised the importance of working with schools to produce a revised data collection template to maximise buy-in;
- A co-opted member suggested looking at the practice in local authorities which were managing to reduce gaps in attainment;
- In order to maintain the momentum of the work carried out the Chairman proposed two additional resolutions to support the development of a template for reporting use of the pupil premium and suggestions of best practice.

It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the report;
- b) ask Officers to develop, with schools, a template for reporting pupil premium based on the coding in the Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit. All schools will be asked to complete and return this to help identify the strategies that have most impact in a Cambridgeshire context;
- c) ask Officers to request suggestions from all schools of effective practice, to supplement existing knowledge gathered through monitoring visits.

#### **74. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

The Committee noted the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2016/17 and offered the following comments and questions:

- A Member noted the relatively small number of enquiries about fostering which resulted in full applications being submitted and asked whether those who did not follow-up their initial enquiries were contacted to find out why. Officers confirmed that this was the case and that the conversion rate for enquiries to approvals in Cambridgeshire was in line with national figures at around 10-11%;
- A Member welcomed the recruitment of more in-house foster carers and the relatively low number of care leavers who were not in education, employment or training (NEETs) which they described as testament to the hard work of those young people and those who supported them;
- A Member noted the increase in adoption orders in September 2016 and asked for more information. Officers explained that the small numbers of children involved meant that any variations appeared quite marked, but that there was no wider significance to this figure.

The Chairman thanked the Service Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding and his team for all of their hard work in support of this most vulnerable group of children and young people and their carers.

It was resolved to:

- a) consider and comment on the report.

## **75. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT: OCTOBER 2017**

The Committee reviewed the Finance and Performance report to the end of October 2017 and offered the following questions and comments:

- A Member questioned the £500,000 increase shown in the out of school tuition budget. Officers stated that this reflected latest assumptions to the end of the year following a review of overall commitments, including the increase in the number of children with Education Health and Care Plans awaiting a permanent school placement able to meet their needs;
- A Member noted the overspend relating to staffing costs associated with supervised contact sessions for children in care. Officers stated that it was a statutory duty to provide such sessions and that increases in numbers of children in care meant more sessions were required;
- Appendix 2, Paragraph 2.1: A Member questioned the forecast variance of 766.6% shown against the Executive Director's subhead and the figure of -1325% shown at page 23 of the appendix. Officers offered to check to the figures and provide an explanation.

**(Action:** Head of Finance)

It was resolved to:

- a) review and comment on the report.

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

The Committee reviewed the agenda plan, appointments and training plan. The Chairman stated that the Outcome Focused Review of Outdoor Education might not be completed by January 2018.

It was resolved to:

- a) review and comment on the Committee Agenda Plan;
- b) review the appointments made by the Committee;
- c) note the Committee training plan.

## **76. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chairman noted that this would be the last meeting before Keith Grimwade's retirement. Mr Grimwade had spent 37 years working in local government, of which 32 had been with Cambridgeshire. He had spent 12 years as a teacher at Hinchbrook School, including time spent as the Head of Geography and the Sixth Form Head of House. His other posts had included the Head of the Cambridgeshire Advisory Service, Head of Professional Development Services and for the past four years as the Director of Learning. His knowledge, passion and commitment to education were recognised far beyond the Council and he would be greatly missed.

Mr Grimwade thanked the Chairman and Members for their kind words and wishes. He had greatly enjoyed his time at the Council and working with the members of the Children and Young People Committee had been a real highlight. He expressed the wish that the public knew more of the work which councillors did on their behalf, across the political spectrum.

The Committee will meet next on Tuesday 9 January 2018 at 2.00pm in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman  
(date)