

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 12 September 2017

Time: 2.00pm – 4.40pm

Present: Councillors S Bywater (Chairman), A Costello, K Cuffley, P Downes, L Every, S Hoy (Vice Chairwoman), L Nethsingha, S Taylor and J Whitehead

Co-opted Member: A Read

Apologies: Councillor A Hay (substituted by K Cuffley)

Co-opted Members: F Vettese

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Co-opted member Andrew Read declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Item 5: Charging for Academy Conversions.

26. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 11 JULY 2017 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes were approved as an accurate record by those present and signed by the Chairman. The Action Log was noted.

27. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no petitions or public questions.

DECISIONS

28. FREE SCHOOL PROPOSALS

Standing item. No business to discuss.

29. CHARGING FOR ACADEMY CONVERSIONS

Andrew Read declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in this item as the Chief Executive of the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust and left the meeting room for the duration of this item.

The Committee received a report from the Executive Director for People and Communities and presented by the Head of Service 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation which sought approval for the introduction of a charging arrangement for the work which the Council was required to undertake and the associated costs incurred when a maintained school converted to an academy. At its meeting on 12 June 2017 the Committee gave agreement in principle to this proposal, but requested that further work be done on the details of the charging model.

In March 2017 the Council was awarded a grant of £50,000 as a one-off contribution towards the costs incurred in facilitating academy conversions. As a condition of this grant the Council was required to increase the number of academy conversions from two to three per month with immediate effect. The majority of this funding had been put towards the cost of employing an Academies Project Officer on a one year fixed term contract.

Officers offered the following additional information in response to questions from Members:

- The £50,000 grant could be rescinded if the target of achieving three academy conversions per month was not met, but in practice the Department for Education recognised that meeting this target was not entirely within the control of the local authority;
- The charging arrangements would not be applied retrospectively to conversions which were already underway.

It was resolved that:

- a) The Council should levy a charge for the work it was required to undertake and the costs it incurred whenever a maintained school chose to convert to an academy using the formula set out in Section 2.4 of the report;
- b) Where a maintained school was required by the Secretary of State for Education to convert to an academy the Council would only charge for the actual legal costs incurred, up to but not exceeding the grant sponsors received from the Department for Education (DfE) to cover conversion costs. The charge would exclude, where appropriate, those related to the statutory transfer in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;
- c) The charges should be levied in respect of those schools with Academy Orders dated on or after 1 September 2017.

Andrew Read returned to the meeting room for the remainder of the meeting.

MONITORING REPORTS

30. LEGAL SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Committee received a report from the Director of LGSS Law Ltd and presented by the Acting Principal Lawyer, LGSS Law Ltd.

In November 2016 the Children and Young People Committee had asked the Executive Director for People and Communities to review practice in relation to legal services with a view to reducing legal costs. A Joint Improvement Plan had been produced to address the issues identified by this review. This included a comprehensive draft Service Level Agreement between LGSS Law Ltd and Children's Social Care; a 'case tracker' to provide a fortnightly update on children's care proceedings; revisions to the instruction form used by social workers to ensure that expenditure on legal services was authorised at an appropriate level; and rolling out training to junior social workers on how to prepare evidence documents and give evidence in court. LGSS Law Ltd was committed to meeting client needs and officer feedback to date on the new arrangements had been positive.

The following points arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions raised by members of the Committee:

- The Acting Principal Lawyer had written to all managers in the People and Communities Directorate advising them of the lawyers and paralegals with responsibility for their areas of business;
- LGSS Law Ltd had recruited slightly above the anticipated level of need and expected to be able to manage all future cases from within its in-house team rather than employing external legal support.

Summing up, the Chairman welcomed the measures described in the report. The costs associated with legal services were significant and it was important that every effort was made to drive these costs down whilst ensuring officers had access to appropriate and timely legal advice. He noted that a full review of implementation of the Joint Improvement Plan would be conducted in January 2018 and asked that the outcome of this should be reported to the Committee.

(Action: Director of LGSS Law Ltd)

It was resolved to:

- a) note the content of the Improvement Plan and its progress to date in meeting the objectives.

31. LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

The Chairman welcomed Dr Russell Wate QPM, Independent Chair of the Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), to the meeting and invited him to introduce his report.

Dr Wate thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to share his report with the Committee and highlighted a number of key points. These included the launch of a new strategy to focus on neglect; an updated and refreshed protocol relating to cases of child sexual exploitation; posing a constructive challenge to providers on assessment timescales relating to initial health assessments for Looked After Children; and discussions with the Police and Crime Commissioner regarding children being held in police cells. Dr Wate stated that he was also the Independent Chair of the Peterborough LSCB and a number of sub-groups had been established to promote joint working across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which were proving a most effective use of time. Constructive links also existed with the Safeguarding Adults Boards in both areas and with other partner organisations including the local Health and Wellbeing Boards. The LSCB was also now represented on the Board of Cambridgeshire Football Association and he noted the positive role which the Board had played in ensuring that all football clubs in the county had a designated safeguarding lead.

The Chairman noted that Councillor Scutt had requested to speak on this item in her capacity as a local Member. Councillor Scutt stated that a number of City and County Councillors sat on the Cambridge North Area Committee. This Committee set some local policing priorities and one of those it had identified was the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people. Councillor Scutt highlighted the role of county councillors as corporate parents to Looked After children and emphasised the vulnerability of this group to abuse and exploitation and the significant number of Looked After children who experienced emotional and mental health problems. She stated that it was vital that

funding for children's services was set at appropriate levels to enable the Council to discharge its statutory duties and to meet the needs of the children and young people of Cambridgeshire. Councillor Scutt called on all Members to oppose any closures to Children's Centres.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Scutt for her comments. He stated that all councillors recognised the unique importance of their role as a corporate parent, but that concern about child sexual exploitation remained a national concern and it was good to acknowledge this publicly. Dr Wate confirmed that care for Looked After children remained an absolute priority for the LSCB.

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

- The Interim Service Director stated that all staff within Children's Services were acutely aware of the need to support and protect the county's Looked After children and young people and that this remained a clearly stated priority;
- Several Members described initiatives to identify or tackle suspected cases of child sexual exploitation and the Chairman noted a presentation given previously to the Committee by a senior police officer which had provided good assurance of the collaborative work taking place with the police service to continue to address this issue locally;
- A Member noted that the LSCB Annual Report 2016/17 stated that Cambridgeshire had nearly 50% more than the national average of 10-12 year olds admitted to hospital for self-harm and sought more information. It was felt that this was in part due to greater awareness of the issue amongst young people themselves leading to increased numbers seeking medical support, but a review conducted by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust had not identified clear reasons behind this figure. Dialogue on the issue remained open amongst the relevant professionals;
- A Member expressed concern about the potential vulnerability of young people living in local households under informal arrangements whilst attending language schools. Dr Wate stated that the LSCB had written to the Department for Education highlighting this issue. It was a statutory duty to inform the local authority about private fostering arrangements such as this, but in practice the number of cases reported was low. Some local language schools were already good at ensuring that the proper notifications were made, but the LSCB was considering writing to all language schools in the area to remind them of this duty;
- A Member sought more information about the arrangements in place for supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children as they reached adulthood. Officers stated that they would remain under the care of the local authority until the age of 25 in the same way as all other Looked After Children and that the same transitional support arrangements would then be offered;
- A Member stated that delays in receiving reports from the Disclosure and Barring Service had previously created difficulties for local football clubs and sought an update on the current situation. Dr Wate stated that the Cambridgeshire Football Association required all adults involved in youth football to pass a DBS check, but that this now took a matter of weeks rather than months to process. The

Cambridgeshire FA carried out unannounced visits to youth training sessions and matches to check that the responsible adults present had passed DBS checks.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the report.

32. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES: PROVISIONAL RESULTS

The Committee received a presentation by the Director of Learning reporting provisional data on educational outcomes in Cambridgeshire. The Chairman had accepted this late information on the grounds that officers had not received the provisional data until after the publication of reports for the meeting and that it was urgent because the Committee had requested an early report on the provisional results. A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix 1.

The Director of Education cautioned that the data provided remained provisional and that the validated results would be presented at the Committee meeting in January 2018. However, it did provide an early indication of how children and young people in the county had performed. Key points of note included:

- Early Years Foundation Stage: an improvement of one percentage point in the numbers achieving a good level of development. This was the same rate as seen nationally and demonstrated steady progress;
- Phonics: a two percentage point improvement in those meeting the required standard in Cambridgeshire against a static picture nationally. This represented a welcome improvement, but overall the performance remained below the national average and remained a priority within the School Improvement Strategy;
- Key Stage 1: an improved performance, but still below the national average. Performance in writing was the weakest of the core subjects and was also an issue at Key Stage 2. This would be a focus for county action;
- Vulnerable Groups: Most vulnerable groups had made progress in their results, but few were closing the gap with their cohort. Comparative national data on the achievement of vulnerable groups and those in receipt of free school meals was not yet available;
- Key Stage 2: The combined results for reading, writing and maths showed a notable improvement over the previous year, but still remained below the national average;
- GCSE: direct comparison with previous years was difficult due to the introduction of a new grading system, but overall there appeared to have been some progress;
- Ofsted assessment: the number of secondary school pupils attending a school assessed as good or outstanding was showing a strong recovery following a significant dip;
- Overall the results suggested steady progress, but vulnerable groups were not yet closing the gap on their cohort.

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

- Members offered congratulations on those areas where the provisional data indicated an improvement in performance and welcomed officers' recognition of those areas where further improvement was required;
- Officers confirmed that the issues included in the Special Educational Needs action plan discussed at the last meeting would contribute to improving the achievement level of this group of students, but noted it had remained a persistent issue over time. The local authority would continue to provide support, advice and constructive challenge to address this issue, but it could not be resolved by the Council alone. It would require all partner organisations to work together;
- Members noted that the Social Mobility Opportunity Area Fund could provide up to £6 million of funding to East Cambridgeshire and Fenland over three years to support progress within disadvantaged groups. This was subject to a competitive bidding process and senior officers had identified the need for professional support to produce high quality bids and maximise returns. The local authority was represented on the strategy group advising on the allocation of any funding obtained and the educational achievement levels of vulnerable groups was one of the areas which had been identified as requiring action. A Member suggested that it might be beneficial to use some of this money to fund research into the causes of the gap in educational achievement between those in vulnerable groups and their peers given the long-standing nature of the problem. Officers undertook to pass this observation on to the Executive Director for People and Communities who represented the local authority on the strategy group;
(Action: Director of Learning)
- A Member commented that it was good to see an improvement in performance in secondary schools and expressed the hope that the Committee's vocal input regarding performance levels at academies had contributed to this;
- Officers confirmed that geographical differences in performance were still pronounced. A Member commented that the Index of Multiple Deprivation provided a good benchmark for standards of living and suggested that it would be interesting to see whether other local authorities experiencing similar differences in economic experience within their borders saw a comparable pattern in relation to variations in educational achievement. Officers stated that the Business Intelligence Team had been tasked with exploring this issue and their findings would be included in the report containing the validated results;
- A Member questioned the level of oversight exercised over the funding delegated to schools to support students with special educational needs. Officers stated that the allocation of special educational needs funding was being reviewed, but the Government's preferred direction of travel was towards increased delegation of funds to schools;
- A Member commented that there was a variation between schools in the way in which the pupil premium was used with some using it to target the SEN cohort whilst others used it as a more general enrichment fund. The Director of Learning stated that for some schools this represented a significant proportion of their available funding. Maintained schools were monitored and it would be possible to do the same in relation to academies as all schools were required to publish this

information on their websites. This could be raised in future with the Schools Forum. Another Member commented that school governors had responsibility for drilling down into the detail of school expenditure and holding head teachers to account. Good training was available to governors on this from the local authority.

Summing up, the Chairman stated that the provisional figures were heading in the right direction but that there was still more work to be done.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the provisional exam results for Cambridgeshire.

33. CAMBRIDGESHIRE CHILDRENS' AND SAFEGUARDING ASSESSMENT

The Committee considered a report by the Interim Service Director on the outcome of the self-assessment of performance across Children's Services and the regional challenge programme undertaken in summer 2017.

The Interim Service Director stated that a good quality, realistic and accurate self-assessment was vital to provide a regular assurance on the service being provided across Children's and Safeguarding Services. This reflected a relentless attention to improvement and recognition of the need to deliver services in innovative ways to meet increasing levels of demand at a time of significant financial constraint. This included a focus on preventative services, de-escalation of need and recruiting and retaining the right workforce to deliver these services. The aspiration to accommodate as many of the Council's Looked After children as possible within the county's borders remained unchanged, but the challenge of identifying sufficient numbers of suitable placements was significant.

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

- It was noted that the Corporate Parenting Panel was chaired by Councillor Every and not, as stated, Councillor Hoy;
- A Member noted the increase in pupils with an Eastern European language as their first language in the Wisbech area and questioned whether a recruitment drive for bilingual learning support assistants might be helpful in reaching out to those members of the community;
- A Member commented that forecast population growth was proportionally greatest in East Cambridgeshire and suggested possible concerns regarding school provision in the local plan. It was noted that East Cambridgeshire District Council which would be considering the local plan at its full Council meeting in early October;
- Officers confirmed that they were working to reduce the number of fixed term pupil exclusions, but without increasing the number of permanent exclusions which remained below the national average;
- A Member questioned the use of the description of the workforce as 'adequate' at Section 4.1 of the self-assessment document given subsequent references to continued challenges in recruiting and retaining senior social work practitioners;

- A Member commented that there appeared to be a focus on physical neglect rather than psychological or cognitive neglect and questioned whether these were also recognised and addressed. Officers stated that legal definitions of severe harm and neglect focused on physical causes, but that there was a clear recognition of the importance of shared activities and experiences in forming secure attachments and supporting the development of parenting skills;
- A Member stated that some local authorities were waiving council tax for care leavers and asked whether this had been considered in Cambridgeshire. Officers acknowledged the importance of securing sustainable placements or tenancies for care leavers and suggested that this might be explored by the Corporate Parenting Panel;
- The Chairman asked for an update on progress in reducing the number of foster placements for individual children to provide greater security and continuity of care. Officers confirmed that there was a tight focus on achieving three placements or less for each child, but that this was not always achievable, especially for those with more challenging needs.

Summing up, the Chairman stated that Members had found the report really useful. The self-assessment was a weighty but informative document which clearly identified what the Council was doing well and those areas which needed further work.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the content of the report, including the areas where services are performing well as well as those where there is a continuing need for improvement.

34. PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE UPDATE

The Committee received a report by the Executive Director for People and Communities and presented by the Director of Learning which reported the current staffing structure in the People and Communities Directorate. Members noted the joint senior leadership arrangements which had been established with Peterborough City Council and welcomed Lou Williams, the newly appointed Service Director for Children's and Safeguarding, who was observing the meeting. Members noted that Meredith Teasdale, Service Director for Strategy and Commissioning, would be leaving the Authority in October to take up a Director of Education position and offered her good wishes for the future. They further noted with regret that the Director of Learning would be retiring in December 2017.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the final People and Communities structure (previously called Children Families and Adults).

35. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report from the Executive Director for People and Communities and the Chief Finance Officer and presented by the Head of 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation setting out an overview of the draft capital programme. Sections one to four of

the report were generic to all Service Committees whilst section five was specific to the People and Communities Directorate. The capital programme would be submitted to Council for approval in February 2018 as part of the wider business planning programme.

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

- The National Funding Formula was currently under review by central government and that it was not yet known how this might affect the establishment of new schools;
- The Education and Skills Funding Agency would top up capital funding secured through S106 funding for the new area special school to be established in Northstowe as this would serve a wide geographical area. A business case for this would need to be submitted;
- Officers confirmed that at present it had been possible to meet the identified need for additional demand for Early Years places arising from the extended entitlement to free childcare for qualifying families. Some providers who had been unable to offer the extended hours required had been lost, but this was not currently creating any difficulty. The situation remained under review;
- Pre-implementation approval had been received for a new school in Cherry Hinton and discussion was continuing about the route by which this would be opened. A Member commented that this school would not meet the needs of residents in Abbey and expressed the hope that this was still being considered;
- The Council's preference when establishing schools was to build in single phases. Previously this policy had been penalised for creating surplus capacity, but the Department for Education now recognised that this was not appropriate and had adjusted its response so funding in 2018/19 recognised that all classrooms were available as year groups moved through the school;
- A Member commented that it would be helpful to have a basic guide to calculate roughly how many school places were likely to be required according to the number of homes offered in new housing developments, but noted concerns about putting figures into the public domain which might subsequently be proved inaccurate following detailed analysis. A report on estimating demand for education provision arising from new housing developments would be brought to the Committee for consideration in December 2017. There was a recognised need to share this information with local authority partners and officers were invited to consider whether it would be helpful to arrange a workshop or seminar for district and city leaders, cabinet members and Committee members to consider this issue.

(**Action:** Head of 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation)

It was resolved to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2018-19 Capital Programme for People & Communities (P&C);
- b) comment on the draft proposals for People & Communities (P&C)'s 2018-19 Capital Programme and endorse their development;

- c) agree that following the programme's adoption by full Council where it proves necessary for new schemes to be added to the capital programme for the reasons identified in section 5.11, these are detailed in the Finance Performance Report for approval initially by the Children and Young People Committee and then General Purposes Committee.

36. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – JULY 2017

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Finance Business Partner reporting on the financial and performance position at the end of July 2017. The overall position has worsened slightly from the previous month and was showing a forecast overspend of £3,276k across the People and Communities Directorate compared to a forecast overspend of £2,528k at the end of June 2017. Provisional figures for August indicated a further worsening of the position. In relation to the expenditure on children and young people's services this related mainly to an increase in the number of Looked After children within the Council's care and a slight delay in delivering expected savings against the Looked After children's budget which would now be realised in 2018/19 rather than 2017/18.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report:

- A Member commented that it had previously been agreed to include a clear summary table in the report which set out current expenditure against budget and the forecast outturn. Officers advised that this table was included in Appendix 1 to the report, but agreed that this would in future be duplicated in the main body of the report for ease of reference;
(**Action:** Strategic Finance Business Partner)
- A report on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would be taken to the Schools Forum in November 2017.

It was resolved to:

- a) review and comment on the report.

37. AGENDA PLAN, APPOINTMENTS AND TRAINING PLAN

The Committee reviewed the agenda plan, training plan and appointments. The Director of Learning reported that officers were now in a position to proceed with the sponsor selection process for a new school at Wintringham Park following the resolution of planning issues. There was some urgency to this issue in view of the demand for school places on the local Loves Farm area. The policy was to draw elected member representation on the selection panel from the chairman, vice chair and lead members in addition to the local Member, but given the short notice it had not been possible in this case to draw sufficient Members from this pool. Given the urgency the Committee agreed that on this occasion the pool should be widened to include all members and substitute members of the Committee. Councillors Costello and Taylor indicated that they might be available.

It was resolved to:

- a) note one change to the forward agenda plan: the report on Future Capacity of Cambridge City Primary Schools has moved from October 2017 to January 2018;

- b) vary the elected Member representation on the Wintringham Park sponsor selection panel from the agreed policy on grounds of urgency;
- c) note that the Executive Director, People and Communities made the following appointments in consultation with Councillor S Bywater, Chairman of the Children and Young People Committee, under delegated authority:

Educational Achievement Board

- Councillor S Bywater
- Councillor S Hoy
- Councillor S Taylor
- Councillor J Whitehead

- d) Note the Committee training plan.

38. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee will meet next on Tuesday 10 October 2017 at 2.00pm in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman
(date)