

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 9 July 2019

Time: 2.00pm – 4.25pm

Venue: Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely CB7 4EE

Present: Councillors S Bywater (Chairman), S Hoy (Vice Chairwoman), D Ambrose Smith, A Bradnam, P Downes (to 3.30pm), L Every, A Hay (to 3.45pm), S Taylor and J Whitehead

Co-opted Member: F Vettese

Apologies: Councillor J Wisson

Co-opted Member: A Read

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

221. ANNOUNCEMENTS, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman expressed his thanks to East Cambridgeshire District Council for agreeing to host the Committee on this occasion.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Wisson and A Read. Declarations of non-pecuniary interest were made at Item 8: Free School Proposals by Councillor L Every in her capacity as the Chair of Governors at Bishop Laney Sixth Form (part of the Cambridge Meridian Academy Trust) and F Vettese as Deputy Director of Schools for the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia (minute 228 below refers).

222. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 21 MAY 2019

The minutes were approved as an accurate record subject to the following amendment and signed by the Chairman:

Minute 219: Free School Proposals

The local Member for Fen Ditton Primary School *noted expressed relief at the delayed opening of the Wing Primary School and expressed relief that due to their concerns about the potential impact this could have had on Fen Ditton Primary School was being taken into account.*

223. ACTION LOG

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

- Minute 219: Free School Proposals: The following update had been circulated to Committee members by email on 8 July 2019:

Action: A Member noted the proposed change from membership of one Multi-Academy Trust to another by Parkside Academy and asked whether the Council's agreement was required to transfer the lease of the site from one Trust to another. Officers undertook to look into this question and provide a note.

Update: The Council does not have to consent for the lease of an academy school to be transferred from one provider to another.

In any commercial lease this would be the case that the landlord would have consent to any assignment but we have been using the DfE standard model (which we believe is universally used) and this does not provide for the Council to provide consent. However, the Academy cannot assign unless they have Secretary of State consent to do so. The clause is detailed below:

3.12.4 The Tenant is permitted to assign or transfer the whole of the Property to a successor charitable or public body where the Secretary of State has given approval in writing to such an assignment or transfer;

The clause is limited too to who the tenant can assign to.

There is no mechanism for the tenant to confirm this has taken place, but the advice of LGSS Law is that one would rely on good practice for them to do so and Cambridgeshire County Council would probably be forewarned in any event through other means.

The Service Director for Education stated that the Council used the Department for Education's standard 125 year lease model, so a Trust taking over a lease would have the balance of the lease period remaining. A Member commented that they accepted the explanation, but that they did not find the position entirely satisfactory.

The Executive Director for People and Communities undertook to circulate an update on Children's Centres.

(Action: Executive Director: People and Communities)

It was resolved to note the Action Log and verbal updates.

224. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

DECISIONS

225. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT: MAY 2019

The May 2019 Finance and Performance report represented the first available report for the 2019/20 financial year. As of the end of May 2019 there was a forecast overspend of £1.3m across core funded budgets relating to Children's Services and Education. Key areas of pressure included the Children in Care budget, home to school transport and specialist services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. An additional pressure was expected on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. As a ring-fenced grant any overspends did not affect the Council's bottom line, but were carried forward as a deficit balance to the following year.

The deficit carry forward to 2019/20 was £7.2m and a number of workstreams were in place to explore ways of reducing costs.

Changes from the 2019/20 Business Plan Capital budgets were contained in Appendix 3 and set out details of project re-phasing and scheme additions and reductions. In total a reduction of £29.7m was projected from savings, changes to funding and project re-phasing. Five of the Children and Young People Performance Indicators were rated as red. These remained unchanged from recent months

Arising from the report, Members:

- Asked that the term 'Children in Care' should be used in preference to 'Looked After Children';
- Noted that the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee had asked for a breakdown of costs associated with Children in Care to explore the expenditure in more detail;
- Noted that significant costs could arise in relation to Children's Services without notice. For example, earlier in the year four young people required secure accommodation which had resulted in a cost of around £600k;
- Questioned the reference to a reduction from 8 Form Entry (FE) to 4FE for Fenland Secondary School, Wisbech. Officers apologised that this had been poorly phrased and stated that the scheme was still planned as an 8FE, but that its delivery would be phased across two sets of 4FE over time.

The Vice Chairwoman commented that her understanding was that the Active Learning Trust bid had been based on 4FE and that the Committee had previously expressly stated that it wanted key elements of the project such as the provision of a gym and dining hall to be included from the outset and not phased in over time. She was concerned that the information in the report before the Committee could be seen to suggest a cut to the planned provision and she felt that this needed to be corrected publicly. She also sought an update on the position in relation to the proposed social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) school.

Officers stated that discussions around the core offer for an 8FE school were taking place alongside delivering the first 4FE and confirmed that it would be delivered as previously stated. The free school bid was based on 4FE. The opening of the whole development had been subject to delays due to highways issues and discussions were continuing with the developer. The SEMH school would continue to be considered alongside proposals for the secondary school. Officers were reviewing every element of the capital programme budget against the background of the significant financial pressures which the Council faced and the results of this would be brought to the Committee when complete. The Chairman welcomed this clarification, but stated that it was important to be clear to the public on the position of projects.

The Vice Chairwoman commented that the Wisbech secondary school had been under discussion now for six years. She was concerned about the status of the SEMH school proposal and felt strongly that the Council should not be issuing press releases about opening schools if the timings were not certain.

- Noted that the revenue costs associated with running a new school had an impact on the funding available to every other school in the county, making it imperative that officers got the timing of opening a new school exactly right;
- Asked about the location of the new or additional site required for the Samuel Pepys Special School. Officers stated that the site search had been limited to the surrounds of the existing school so it would continue to serve the people of St Neots;
- Asked whether the two special schools graded by Ofsted as requiring improvement had an action plan in place. The Service Director for Education stated that one was a maintained school and that officers were working to support the school;
- Noted the Service Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding's comment that the impact of the restructuring of services was beginning to be seen on the ground, although this was not yet being reflected in the Finance and Performance reports due to the lag in the reporting timeframe. He would expect to see this becoming more evident over time, although the need to respond to unusual incidents would always impact on budgets;
- Noted that a net increase of 15 in-house foster care placements had been achieved to date through the use of Transformation Funding to support of foster carer recruitment activity.

The Chairman stated that the Council was continuing to lobby hard for improved central Government funding for essential services through direct contact, via the Local Government Association and alongside the Schools Forum. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that the Association of Directors of Children's Services had also made their concerns known to the Minister of State at its annual conference.

It was resolved by a majority to:

- a) Review and comment on the report;
- b) Recommend the changes to the capital programme budgets from the Business Plan as summarised in Appendix 3 to the General Purposes Committee for approval:
 - i. Rephasing (including roll-forwards from 2018-19 totalling £2,624k)
 - ii. Scheme additions/reductions
 - iii. Additions/reductions in funding

226. SERVICE DIRECTORS' REPORT JULY 2019– CHILDREN AND SAFEGUARDING

The Committee received a report containing an update on key areas of performance within Children's Services together with a copy of the action plan which had been generated in response to the Ofsted inspection in January 2019. It also detailed a successful bid for funding to implement the Family Safeguarding model in Cambridgeshire.

The Service Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding stated that previous reports had provided a narrative to the challenges faced by Children's Services and the restructuring of services which had taken place to meet these. Moving forward, he wanted to introduce more numerical and statistical information into the reports. Progress was being made, but there was still more to do to ensure that Children's

Services were working with the right children for the right length of time. The majority of children could best be supported by universal services or at an early help level whilst the number requiring social care intervention should be very small. Historically, his sense was that access thresholds to social care in Cambridgeshire had been a little low. Unnecessary referrals to social care services could discourage families from seeking support and direct resources away from where they were most needed as well as directing resources away from those in most need so it was important that thresholds were set at an appropriate level. Caseloads had reduced since the Ofsted inspection in January 2019 as the new staffing structure bedded in, but were still higher than would be wished. The Committee's support was sought to exploring ways to improve recruitment and retention within existing resources in those areas of the service where this remained a particular challenge. The Committee was also invited to note the Department for Education's decision to award the Council significant funding to support its development of the Family Safeguarding model. This was a multi-disciplinary approach designed to ensure that children were supported effectively within their families.

During discussion Members:

- Asked whether the table at paragraph 2.5 was the best way of displaying data about caseloads. Officers stated that it was usual for local authorities to measure caseloads based on an average figure, although it was acknowledged that this could mask differences in individual workload. The aim was to reduce the average caseload to 15, but this would be dependent on recruiting the necessary staff which remained a challenge, particularly in some parts of the county;
- Asked whether it was correct that Central Bedfordshire Council was paying higher wages to attract social workers. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that a memorandum of co-operation existed between members of the Directors of Children's Services (DCS) regional group regarding pay levels to provide a consistent offer, although exemptions could be sought in areas where particular difficulties existed with recruitment. Central Bedfordshire's pay scale was the same as Cambridgeshire, but they offered a 'golden handshake' payment of £5000 to new joiners. Northamptonshire County Council was not a member of the DCS Regional Group and paid significantly higher rates. The Service Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding was looking into these examples, but his preliminary view was that any additional payments should be related to retention rates rather than targeted to new joiners. In response to a Member's concern that retention incentives could prove divisive amongst staff, officers stated that if this option was pursued, it could be targeted at those teams experiencing particular retention difficulties and so would be open to any member of staff willing to move to work in those teams;
- Asked whether the proposed work on recruitment and retention could include a collaborative piece of work across children's social care and education to explore ways of developing new pathways into social care professions via the county's academic and health service providers. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that she chaired the Council's Recruitment and Retention Group and would be happy to take this question forward through that forum. The Service Directors for Education and Children's Services and Safeguarding noted the need to engage colleges in this work and to consider the role of apprenticeships. The

Chairman welcomed this suggestion and asked that officers report back on progress in due course.

(**Action:** Executive Director, People and Communities)

- Offered congratulations to officers on securing significant funding from the Department for Education to support the Council's development of the Family Safeguarding model;
- Asked whether there would be value in seeking Transformation Funding for a piece of research into why approaches were made to Children's Social Care rather than to other support services. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that officers' sense was that those living in more affluent parts of the county had a different perception of what constituted a child in need of social care support. Work with communities was needed to address this and offer meaningful and appropriate alternatives to seeking social care support. The Vice Chairwoman acknowledged this, but commented that the Committee must recognise that in the short term this could lead to identified need going up rather than down. The Director of Children's Services and Safeguarding concurred, stating that the Family Safeguarding model required a different way of working with families which could involve spending longer alongside them supporting them to address practical problems. In Peterborough the number of children on the Child Protection Register had initially gone up, but had now gone down.

The Chairman thanked the Service Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding and his team for their trail-blazing work on safeguarding which represented a significant piece of work.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the information within the report relating to the performance of children's services;
- b) Note the content of the action plan following the recent Ofsted inspection and agree to receive regular updates in respect of this;
- c) Agree in principle to the exploring ways in which we can improve recruitment and retention of particular roles in parts of the service where this remains a challenge;
- d) Note the decision by the Department for Education (DfE) to award significant funding to Cambridgeshire County Council to support our development of the Family Safeguarding model.

227. SERVICE DIRECTORS' REPORT JULY 2019: EDUCATION

The Service Director for Education's report addressed Member engagement in education; the educational performance of children in care; special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) challenges; education capital projects and place planning; financial pressure in schools and maintained school balances. The Committee considered each area in turn.

Member Engagement in Education

Members were invited to review and endorse the proposals in Appendices 1 and 2 which were based on a Local Government Association guide. Members had a key role to play in school improvement and the document sought to clarify this for the benefit of both schools and Members.

The Chairman stated that he felt this to be a very good idea. Committee members had a clear understanding of their role in relation to their local schools, but he saw great value in consolidating this information into a single document for the benefit of new Members and those not regularly involved in education matters.

The Vice Chairwoman also welcomed the proposals, but asked how issues raised by schools should be handled. The Service Director for Education stated that officers within his team would work with Members to help direct queries to the right person or organisation. All schools had an officer contact within the Council and that would often be a good place to start.

In discussion, Members:

- Suggested that officers might consider a small pilot project, perhaps with members of the Committee and a small number of schools to test it out before it was rolled out across the county. It was noted that it was proposed that the Service Director for Education would write to all schools to share this information when it was finalised and it was suggested that he should consider writing in similar terms to all Members;
(**Action:** Service Director for Education)
- Encouraged all Members to approach schools within their divisions and not wait for schools to approach them;
- Emphasised that they did not wish to create additional unnecessary work for schools;
- Suggested that the guidance should be clear about the difference in Members' role in relation to maintained schools and academies. The Service Director for Education stated that officers were working on a flow chart for parents to show where they should go for help with queries relating to different types of schools. However, he should Members have concerns about any school, maintained or academy, they should raise these with him and officers would pursue them as appropriate.

Children in Care: Educational Performance

The Committee noted that as corporate parents all councillors had a direct responsibility to oversee the outcomes of children in care. In Cambridgeshire, the Virtual School worked with children in care and care experienced children to promote aspirations within this group and raise achievement through challenge, support and targeted intervention. Performance for the previous year still showed some significant gaps, but due to the small cohort it was difficult to make meaningful comparisons to data from previous years. A Member commented that this was clearly a group of children and young people that was not attaining to the standard Members would wish.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Challenges

Significant pressures continued around the statutory assessment process. Government funding had been cut this financial year despite an increase in workload and officers had made a case to the Strategic Management Team for additional funding to meet the Council's statutory obligations. The draft SEND Strategy was attached as Appendix 3 to the report and an action plan would be brought to the Committee in the Autumn. New service delivery models for educational psychology and specialist teaching services were being explored in response to feedback from schools that the current delivery model was too rigid. A time-allocation model was being trialled and schools' initial response to this had been positive.

Education Capital and Place Planning

In December 2018 the Committee had requested that officers carry out further work in liaison with the headteacher of Spring Common Academy on the works needed to create additional capacity and address suitability issues at the school. A revised scheme was proposed at an estimated capital cost of £3m. The Academy Trust and headteacher were happy with the proposal. Councillor Sanderson, the local member for Spring Common Academy, had also confirmed that he was happy with what was proposed.

Further work had also taken place on the proposed amalgamation of Eastfield Infant and Nursery School and Westfield Junior School following a challenge from the Committee on the increase in costs for the project from around £7m to around £15m. Following further work on demographic forecasts it was now judged that a 2 Form Entry (2FE) option should be considered rather than a 3FE as previously proposed. Both sets of Governing Bodies had agreed in principle to consider this approach and it was hoped that a solution could now be delivered within the original capital allocation of £7m. It was hoped that the revised proposal could be brought to the Committee in September 2019.

Maintained School Balances

The figures contained in the report showed an overall increase in maintained school balances between 31 March 2018 and 31 March 2019. There were a variety of explanations for this change including schools' uncertainty about the financial situation going forward, reduced or re-phased capital expenditure and falling rolls in some areas. Officers were also collating information on academy reserves from their published accounts. The Service Director for Education would continue to challenge any balances which appeared excessive, but he also proposed to discuss with the Schools Forum whether a balance control mechanism was needed.

The Chairman stated that the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive had written to the Schools Forum on this issue as it was hard to lobby central Government for additional funding for education when school balances were increasing. The Service Director for Education undertook to share this letter with members of the Committee. (**Action:** Service Director for Education)

A Member commented that money was given to schools to spend on the education of their pupils, but that the Schools Forum continued to look to the local authority to provide additional funding whilst some schools were holding significant reserves. They judged that the Council should issue strong guidance on this which included a clear statement on what the Council deemed to be an unacceptable balance. The Service Director for Education suggested a possible threshold of 8% balances with the requirement that any school exceeding this sum should be required to justify it.

The Chairman stated that there was no wish to take money away from schools or discourage prudent financial management, but that excessive balances undermined the county's argument for the need for additional funding.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Review the documentation in Appendices 1 and 2 and agree actions outlined in 2.8 to support the role of Members in school improvement (section 2.1 to 2.9)
- b) Note the final outcomes data for children in care in Cambridgeshire (section 2.10 to 2.24)
- c) Recommend the inclusion of the scheme for Spring Common Academy in the capital programme for 2019 to the General Purposes Committee for decision (section 2.31 to 2.39)
- d) Note the progress that is being made to ensure children in the catchment of Eastfield Infant and Nursery School and Westfield Junior Schools have a high quality and sustainable learning environment (section 2.40 to 2.44)
- e) Consider its response to the position of maintained schools balances and whether the Committee wishes to make representation to Schools Forum on the balance control mechanism in maintained schools (Section 2.51 to 2.65)
- f) Note the approach to gathering information on the budget pressures in schools and support officers in making the case for further funding for Cambridgeshire to Ministers and MPs. (Section 2.66 to 2.75)

228. FREE SCHOOL PROPOSALS

Declarations of non-pecuniary interest were made by Councillor L Every in her capacity as the Chair of Governors at Bishop Laney Sixth Form (a member of the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust). A declaration of non-pecuniary interest was also made by Mr F Vettese as Deputy Director of Schools for the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia in relation to an unsuccessful bid made to the Department for Education capital fund for the establishment of a new voluntary aided primary school at Northstowe.

No applications made under Wave 13 of the Central Free School Programme had been successful. This meant that the Council would need to run a free school competition to establish new schools where a basic need still existed unless there were any successful applications under Wave 14. All Academy Trusts in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough had been advised of areas where a basic need for a new school existed and officers had offered to work with them to develop their proposals.

Arising from the report:

- The Vice Chairwoman asked why the Council was not supporting any Wave 14 bids to address areas with a basic need. She noted officers' advice that no Trusts had approached the Council, but judged that the Council should be more proactive in encouraging Trusts to bid where a basic need existed. Another Member suggested that officers could encourage previously unsuccessful bidders to reapply where a basic need continued to exist and help them refine

their proposals. The Chairman endorsed this suggestion and asked that it should be recorded.

(**Action**: Strategic Education Place Planning Manager)

- Mr Vettese stated that the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia had not yet received feedback on its unsuccessful application to establish a voluntary aided primary school at Northstowe;
- A Member commented that the Marshall's Group, the owner of Cambridge Airport, had announced plans to relocate and that the land would be made available for development, subject to the necessary planning permissions. South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council were in discussion about its potential future use and the Member suggested the County Council might wish to make representations regarding the location of a secondary school on the site to serve the east of the City. Officers stated that educational provision would form part of the planning process for the site.

It was resolved by a majority to:

- a) Note the outcome of Wave 13 of the DfE's central free school programme and Voluntary Aided Capital Funding scheme.
- b) The consequent need for the Council to run a free school competition to establish new schools where there is basic need.

INFORMATION AND MONITORING REORTS

229. CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL FEEDBACK REPORT 2018-19

The Committee reviewed the Children's Services Annual Feedback Report 2018/19 in accordance with its statutory duty to monitor the arrangements in place for handling complaints about Children's Services. During 2018/19 there had been an increase in the number of complaints relating to children's social care (statutory complaints) and corporate complaints (non-statutory complaints). However, in the context of the number of cases open to children's social care services the number of complaints remained a very small percentage of the overall children in care population. For the second successive year South Cambridgeshire had received the highest number of complaints and this part of the county continued to experience difficulties with staff recruitment and retention. Whilst there had also been an increase in the number of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (13 in 2018/19 compared to 5 in 2017/18) only two of these complaints had been upheld. The Customer Care Team was striving to address the concerns expressed by those making complaints and this now involved offering a meeting with the relevant Head of Service where complaints were not initially resolved. This had led to a reduction in the number of statutory complaints progressing to stages 2 and 3 of the process.

During discussion of the report:

- The Committee noted that the number of compliments received during the period outweighed the number of complaints;
- A Member asked whether the complaints for South Cambridgeshire were the highest per head of population as well as the highest in total. Officers undertook explore whether this figure could be included in future reports;

- The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that she reviewed the complaints received. The tone and manner in which complaints were dealt with was respectful and positive and this had led to fewer repeat complaints or complaint escalations even when the Council did not share the complainants view. The Chairman stated that this had been his experience too and he welcomed the professionalism with which complaints were handled.

The Chairman thanked officers for the report and for their work throughout the year and stated that the Committee looked forward to receiving a further update in twelve months' time.

It was resolved to consider the Children's Services Feedback Annual Report 2018-19 and request a further report in 12 months.

230. FENLAND AND EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE OPPORTUNITY AREA UPDATE

The Chairman stated that he was delighted to receive an update on the Opportunities Area programme and to be able to discuss this during the Committee's visit to Ely. He welcomed Jamie Weatherhead, Head of Delivery at the Department for Education (DfE) and Cheryl Oakman, DfE Area Lead, to the meeting and invited them to introduce the report.

The Opportunity Area programme had begun in 2017 and Fenland and East Cambridgeshire had jointly been designated one of twelve Opportunity Areas across the country. The programme aimed to address barriers to social mobility and to support children and young people to access high quality education and achieve to their full potential. In Fenland and East Cambridgeshire a Partnership Board had been established comprising an Independent Chair and key local stakeholders to have oversight of the programme and advise on local priorities and the programmes needed to address them. Four priority areas were identified:

- i. Priority 1: To accelerate the progress of disadvantaged children and young people in the acquisition and development of communication, language and reading skills;
- ii. Priority 2: To strengthen the effectiveness of support for children and young people with mental health concerns and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND);
- iii. Priority 3: To raise aspirations and increase access for young people to a wide range of career choices and Post 16 routes; and
- iv. Priority 4: To recruit, develop and retain the best leaders and teachers in Fenland and East Cambridgeshire.

Comprehensive details of the projects established to deliver these outcomes were described in the report and included the provision of expert advice from the National Lead for Education; a large inclusion programme, especially around those with SEND; supporting Ely College to develop its Post 16 provision; and working with a provider in Norfolk with a strong track record to support all four sixth forms in Fenland. Teacher recruitment was being supported through a marketing campaign to promote Fenland as a positive place to live and work. There had, however, been a number of challenges during the course of the programme. It had taken time to develop engagement with schools, but the position had improved over time and all schools within the Opportunity Area were now accessing some type of support. Officers and officials were working

closely with headteachers to address specific needs. Schools' dissatisfaction with overall funding levels, poor transport links which hampered access to opportunities and concerns about their ability to sustain improvements beyond the additional funding period had been made clear. The current programme was due to end in August 2020 so work was increasingly focused on sustainability and legacy. The Secretary of State for Education had expressed the view that the programme should be expanded beyond August 2020, but final decisions would be dependent on the outcome of the Spending Review and the priorities of the next Prime Minister.

The Chairman thanked officials for their report and briefing, but stated that it did not contain much information about outcomes given that the programme had now been running for two years. This type of evidence would be crucial to measure the success of particular initiatives and to support any future funding requests. For example, he asked whether it was possible to quantify the impact on teacher recruitment rates. Officials stated that 15 teachers had been recruited to Foundation Stage posts, 21 to the Teach First programme during the current year with a further 15 expected in 2020 and around 30 by schools using a recruitment grant, but it was not possible to extrapolate how many of these were as a direct result of Opportunity Area interventions. However, anecdotal evidence from headteachers suggested that the number of applications which they were receiving had increased.

In discussion of the report:

- A Member commented that Ely College now had a full complement of staff and that the school had found it easier to recruit to vacancies;
- The Vice Chairwoman commented that as a councillor with a Division in Fenland she did not feel well informed about the Opportunity Area programme. It would be helpful for local Members to be made aware of which projects existed within their areas and which schools were accessing them so that they could signpost schools to the opportunities available to them and support and encourage them to apply. She had seen improvements locally at secondary school level, but two primary schools within her Division had gone into Special Measures whilst the Opportunity Area programme had been in operation and it was important to know whether they were accessing any additional support. Officials welcomed the improvements which had been achieved at secondary school level, but agreed that this had been less evident at primary school level although they judged that headteachers across all school phases were now recognising the potential benefits. They undertook to provide details of the programmes available in each area and the schools involved;
(**Action:** DfE Area Lead)
- A Member questioned whether project uptake might be limited by schools' capacity to take on any additional commitments. Officers stated that Opportunity Area funding was being used in some schools to support the capacity of headteachers to get involved in projects and training;
- A Member with a Division in East Cambridgeshire commented that priorities had been set by the stakeholder group rather than by the Partnership Board and so had come from the grass roots up rather than being imposed from the top down. Stakeholder groups were still in existence and continued to contribute to the work programme;

- A Member asked what evaluation of the programme would take place when it came to a close in August 2020, given the significant amounts of public money involved. Officials stated that there would be a national evaluation of all 12 projects at that time. This would be in addition to the specific evaluation of some individual projects where significant sums had been invested. This evaluation would be shared with the Committee when available;
(**Action:** Head of Delivery, DfE)
- The Service Director for Education undertook to highlight schools within the Opportunity Area which had accessed support and include some of the qualitative information available around programme outcomes when he presented the unvalidated 2019 examination results in the autumn;
(**Action:** Service Director for Education)
- A Co-opted Member commented that he had heard positive reports about Opportunity Area support from other areas which had received funding;
- The Head of Delivery stated that this was the first time that officials had been invited to discuss the Opportunity Area programme with county councillors. They already had established channels of communication with East Cambridgeshire District Council and Fenland District Council and would be happy to open a similar line of communication with the County Council. The Chairman accepted this offer, commenting that the questions and challenges posed by the Committee should not be perceived as a negative attitude towards the Opportunity Area programme. Rather, they demonstrated the Committee's wish to fully understand the work being undertaken so that they would be best able to encourage and support it.

It was resolved to note the report.

DECISIONS

231. AGENDA PLAN, APPOINTMENTS AND TRAINING PLAN

There were no changes to the published Committee agenda or training plans.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the Committee agenda plan;
- b) Note that the Executive Director for People and Communities had exercised her delegated authority in relation to Committee appointments, in consultation with the Chairman, to end Councillor B Hunt's appointment to the Elizabeth March Charity, Haddenham;
- c) Note the Committee training plan.

Chairman
(date)