

Children and Young People Committee: Minutes

Date: 14 September 2021

Time: 2.00pm – 4.37pm

Venue: Multi-Function Room, New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald PE28 4YE

Present: Councillors D Ambrose Smith, M Atkins, A Bulat, C Daunton, D Dew, B Goodliffe (Chair), A Hay, J King, M King (Vice Chair), M McGuire, L Nethsingha, K Prentice, A Sharp, P Slatter and S Taylor

Co-opted Member:
Canon A Read, Church of England Diocese of Ely

Apologies: Councillor S Hoy, substituted by Councillor D Dew; Councillor F Thompson, substituted by Councillor L Nethsingha; and F Vettese, co-opted member representing the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia

Also present: Councillor S Ferguson
Mayor Dr Nik Johnson (to agenda item 8)

12. Change to Committee Membership

The Committee noted that Councillor M McGuire had replaced Councillor S Bywater as a member of the Children and Young People Committee, and that Councillor S Bywater had replaced Councillor J Schumann as a substitute member of the committee.

The Chair welcomed Councillor McGuire, commenting that as a former Chairman of the Council he brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the committee. She also placed on record her thanks to Councillor Bywater for his contribution to the committee's work in recent years, first as a committee member and more recently as the previous committee chair.

13. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were noted as reported above.

Councillor M McGuire declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 8: Home to School Transport, in that he had a grandchild entitled to Post 16 transport on the grounds of special educational needs or a disability. Minute 19 below refers.

14. Minutes – 29 June 2021 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting on 29 June 2021 were approved as an accurate record, subject to the addition of more detail around the comments made in relation to foster carers.

Individual Members raised the following queries in relation to the action log:

- asked when training on the role of foster carers would be delivered and that this should be made available to all Members. Officers stated that the committee's request for this training had been added to the committee training plan and that a date would be arranged.
- asked when information on the location of the county's small school's would be circulated. The Director of Education undertook to share this with committee members.

15. Petitions and Public Questions

The Committee received one petition from Nadia Bowes and Mayor Dr Nik Johnson, which was heard at Item 8: Home to School Transport, and one public question from James Boyle, a local resident, in relation to secondary school provision for St Neots.

Mr Boyle's question was published on the Council's website and circulated electronically to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting. A copy is attached at Appendix 1 with the Chair's response. There were no questions of clarification from the committee. Details of the detailed student forecasts and methodology behind these would be shared with Mr Boyle and also made available to any members of the public who wished to view them. **ACTION**

16. Recommissioning of Appropriate Adult (PACE) Service and Reparation Services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

The Committee was invited to approve the recommissioning and procurement of two services. The Appropriate Adult Service ensured that every young person and vulnerable adult taken to a police station had their rights to appropriate adult support protected. There was a statutory duty to provide this service on a face to face basis every day of the year for children and young people aged 10 to 17 and vulnerable adults should be provided with the same support. The Reparation Service was integral to the restorative justice system and provided a structured way for offenders to make amends for their offences. The Appropriate Adult Service was co-commissioned and funded by the County Council (CCC), Peterborough City Council (PCC) and Cambridgeshire Constabulary with the County Council acting as lead commissioner. The cost would be over £500k for a five year contract. The Reparation Service was co-commissioned and funded by CCC and PCC with CCC again acting as lead commissioner. The annual budget for Reparation Services was £90k. Consideration had been given to delivering the service in-house, but officers judged that the difficulties in doing so would outweigh the benefits and so advised that the services should be recommissioned with external providers.

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

- commented on the importance of these services being delivered by the right people and welcomed the continuity in provision.
- commented that no reference was made to the impact on the community in the body of the report, although this was subsequently referenced at paragraph 4.4. Officers stated that it was a requirement that providers liaised with the local community, but that reparation to the victim took priority.
- asked whether a similar report would be taken to the Adults and Health Committee. Officers stated that there had been discussions around whether this decision should be taken by the Children and Young People (CYP) Committee or the Adults and Health (A&H) Committee. As it related to a statutory duty in relation to children and young people it had been brought to CYP.
- asked for clarification of the costs apportioned to each of the three co-commissioners. Officers stated that for the Appropriate Adult Service both CCC and PCC would contribute 37% of the cost with the remaining 26% funded by Cambridgeshire Constabulary. The cost of the Reparation Service was split equally between CCC and PCC.
- queried what support was provided in relation to the Appropriate Adult Service by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (P&CC). Officers stated that the P&CC helped apply the learning from a previous pilot project, kept officers informed of policy changes and supported liaison with Cambridgeshire Constabulary, but did not make a financial contribution to the service.
- asked the maximum cost of the contracts covered by the delegated authority proposed at recommendation (b). Officers stated that suppliers could not bid over the sum available or their bids would be rejected. When the tender was launched the Council would provide a pricing schedule so bids might be received which were lower than the available budget.
- Asked what sum was in the budget now as an increase of £57.5k was shown in the report. The Executive Director: People and Communities stated that this had been identified as a budget pressure.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree the recommissioning and procurement of Appropriate Adult (Police and Crime Evidence) services and Reparation Services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; and
- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director: People and Communities to commit funding at the time of the award of the contract.

Co-opted members of the committee were eligible to vote on this item.

17. Tender for Early Years Provision in Arbury, Cambridge City

The Committee was advised that the Council had a statutory duty to provide sufficient early years (EY) places. The current EY provider in Arbury provided 74 sessional places which enabled local families to access their free entitlement, but did not wish to continue. Officers were seeking the Committee's agreement to launch a tender process to secure a new EY provider to provide continuity of provision.

Councillor Cox Condron, local Member for Arbury Division, had provided written comments in support of the officer recommendation. A copy is attached at Appendix 2.

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

- asked for more information about demand for EY places in Cambridge and around the county and how these were funded. Officers stated that a review of the demand for EY places was currently underway. Demand for places in Cambridge City was higher than elsewhere in the county which supported the officer recommendation to seek a new provider for Arbury, but officers were not aware of any shortage of places. The Service Director for Education stated that his November report would include a sufficiency analysis for the whole of Cambridgeshire. All places were funded through the Early Years Block within the Dedicated Schools Grants (DSG). These resources were targeted to meet statutory sufficiency requirements
- asked whether any skills shortages were being experienced by EY providers. Officers stated that EY was a vocational profession and that the tiered training approach offered by local colleges was proving successful. EY settings were though experiencing the same recruitment challenges as many other sectors
- asked why the current provider had chosen to withdraw its provision in Arbury and whether there were any lessons to be learned from this. Officers stated that the existing provider was a national organisation which was re-structuring its offer
- asked about the implications of the expansion of Greater Cambridge on EY provision. Officers stated that new developments usually located EY settings on school sites via Section 106 funding and looked for a contribution of land. Officers worked with the planning team and developers across the county to ensure sufficient EY provision for new developments
- asked about the projected number of EY places needed in Arbury over the next five years compared to the number needed in the past five years. Officers offered to provide this information outside of the meeting ACTION

It was resolved unanimously to:

Approve the launch of a tender process to secure a new childcare provider to deliver early years and childcare from 38 Carlton Way, Cambridge, CB4 2DE.

Co-opted members of the committee were eligible to vote on this item.

18. Finance Monitoring Report – July 2021

The Committee was advised that the main area of change from the last report related to an increase in costs relating to children in care. This was due to an increase in the complexity of the needs of the children concerned rather than an increase in the number of children being supported. Officers had been able to mitigate these costs during the current financial year, but it remained a volatile budget.

A Member raised the following issue in relation to the report:

- noted that there were now seven young people placed in residential care homes and asked whether the Council had enough residential places available. The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that the service was currently looking at whether there was a need for the Council to create its own residential provision. Demand for residential places for children and young people remained high nationally and officers were working on a business plan to deliver this service in anticipation of Department for Education funding being available in this area in the next financial year

The Committee:

- a) Reviewed and commented on the report.
- b) Noted the Section 256 arrangement in respect of the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Information, Advice & Support Service (IASS).
- c) Noted the Section 76 agreement in respect of Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT).
- d) Noted the Section 75 agreement in respect of Occupational Therapy (OT)

19. Home to School Transport

Councillor M McGuire declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 8: Home to School Transport, in that he had a grandchild entitled to Post 16 transport on the grounds of special educational needs or a disability. Minute 13 above also refers.

The Committee was advised that the Council had a statutory duty in relation to the provision of home to school transport to eligible children and young people. It also provided some discretionary support with transport to some families in line with its current published policy. Members' attention was drawn to the discretionary provision of free transport to after school clubs run by five of the county's area special schools. A proposal to consult on ending this discretionary provision had been approved by the Committee in January 2020. However, this had not been pursued due to Covid. Officers acknowledged the benefits of attending after school clubs for those children and young people currently in receipt of this discretionary provision. However, the same provision was not made available to all special school pupils or to children and young people with education, health and care plans (EHCP) in mainstream settings, so

the current provision was not equitable. Officers proposed conducting a wider consultation process which would capture the views both of those currently receiving the discretionary provision, but also those who were not. It was also proposed to undertake a detailed review of all those routes currently deemed as unavailable (unsafe) for a child to walk to school, accompanied as necessary by an adult.

The Committee heard a petition from Nadia Bowes, a local resident and parent of a child with complex additional needs, and Mayor Dr Nik Johnson which called on the Council to keep after school transport for Cambridgeshire children with additional needs. A copy of the petition was published on the [Council's website](#) and circulated electronically to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting. The petition was originally submitted in February 2020 as proposals relating to home to school transport were due to be considered by the Children and Young People Committee in April 2020. Consideration of this issue was subsequently postponed due to Covid-19

Ms Bowes commented that children and young people with additional needs faced real barriers to social inclusion and that these had only been exacerbated by Covid. The opportunity to attend after school clubs offered unparalleled opportunities for these most vulnerable of children and young people to build friendships and relationships in a safe and accessible environment. She expressed concern that many children with additional needs would no longer be able to access these after school activities if their discretionary transport was withdrawn or if a charge was made for the service. Whilst children might be assessed and awarded direct payments to enable them to access activities much of this money remained unspent as suitable activities were not readily available. The situation had become even more difficult during Covid with the need for shielding and some families were on the brink of exhaustion and collapse. Research showed that children with special educational needs and disabilities had been most adversely affected by Covid. She called on the Council to continue the provision of transport to special school after school clubs to give those children the opportunity to attend and improve their quality of life.

The Chair thanked Ms Bowes for bringing her daughter's voice and the voices of the other children and young people accessing transport to special school after school clubs before the Committee as it considered this issue.

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

- thanked Ms Bowes for her eloquence in sharing her family's experience and that of other children and young people with complex additional needs
- suggested that the issue of home to school transport should be considered with the Mayor in the wider context of public transport provision across Cambridgeshire
- expressed the hope that it would be possible to build a transport service that worked better for all by working constructively with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership
- highlighted the importance of public transport links in rural areas

- commented that a decision to review the existing provision did not necessarily mean that it would be removed
- commented that a better way might be found to deliver education transport provision more generally, so reducing the number of education transport appeals
- welcomed the proposed review of unavailable routes
- highlighted the complexity of need experienced by children and young people attending special schools
- expressed support for the review, but emphasised the importance to ensuring that as many people as possible were able to contribute. Officers stated that if the proposed consultation was approved they were keen to broaden the pool of consultees, including capturing the voices of families with children attending special schools which did not currently offer free transport to after school clubs. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that the PinPoint parent and carer support group would also be a key consultee
- asked about the environmental impact of the provision and suggested that a comprehensive environmental impact assessment should be undertaken. The Service Director for Education confirmed that this issue would be considered
- noted that the Council's budget remained under significant pressure and asked that the cost of offering transport to after school clubs for all children attending the county's special schools should be included in any future report so that the committee could make an informed decision. Officers stated that at present there were 1190 children attending special schools within the county
- asked about the number of children and young people in receipt of personal transport budgets and for clarification around the criteria and the cost per mile of taxi provision. Officers stated that applications were assessed on a case by case basis. The forecast cost for single occupancy taxis for special school transport provision in the current financial year was around £5m. Officers undertook to provide details of the cost per mile for taxi provision outside of the meeting.
Action The Service Director for Education emphasised the need to seek efficiency in the delivery of home to school transport
- asked about the timeline for the review of the provision of transport to special school after school clubs should the committee decide to proceed with this. Officers suggested that no changes to current provision should take place before September 2022 to allow sufficient time to consult all interested parties and to consider the responses received. Should any changes to provision subsequently be agreed by the committee families would be given at least a term's notice. Officers offered to share more information on the proposed timeline with the committee if the proposal to consult was approved **Action**
- the Service Director for Education highlighted the need for equity of access and opportunity for all

- questioned the presumption of withdrawing free transport to the after school clubs run by five of the County's Area Special Schools in the proposed consultation on this provision.

With the consent of the meeting, it was agreed that the wording of recommendation (a) should be amended from, 'That Council should continue to exercise its discretion or provide support to families in line with its current published policy and officers undertake a review of any of the discretionary elements' to, 'That Council should continue to exercise its discretion and provide support to families in line with its current published policy and officers undertake a review of any of the discretionary elements.' It was further agreed with the consent of the meeting that recommendation (b) should be amended from, '...to approve the proposal to proceed to consultation on withdrawing this discretionary support with effect from September 2022 to, '...to approve the proposal to proceed to consultation on reviewing this discretionary support with effect from September 2022.

It was resolved unanimously:

- a) That Council should continue to exercise its discretion and provide support to families in line with its current published policy and officers undertake a review of any of the discretionary elements.
- b) With particular regard to the provision of free transport to the After School Clubs which are run by five of the County's Area Special Schools, to approve the proposal to proceed to consultation on reviewing this discretionary support with effect from September 2022.
- c) Approve the proposal to undertake a detailed review of routes currently deemed as unavailable (unsafe) for a child to walk to school, accompanied as necessary, by an adult.
- d) Note the Independent Travel Training pilot project and, in particular, its focus on supporting young people to gain greater independence as they approach adulthood.
- e) Note and comment on the criteria which have been proposed for adoption to inform future decisions on Parental Transport Budgets.

Co-opted members of the committee were eligible to vote on this item.

20. Covid-19 Local Support Grant – Summer Holiday Support – Procurement of Voucher Scheme

The first section of the report provided a retrospective update on the chief executive's use of emergency powers to undertake the allocation of supermarket vouchers via Wonde for the summer holiday period. The scheme had run smoothly with vouchers totalling £38k being distributed to families. The feedback from families had been positive and officers were following up on those vouchers which had not yet been taken up. The Education team was also working closely with the Service Director for Adults

and Communities in relation to the support available to families through the County Hub and district councils. These initiatives had shown that the Council could play an important role in supporting economic wellbeing and social mobility. The proposals set out from paragraph 1.14 onwards were designed to maintain this momentum and focused on future support being managed through the County Hub and in collaboration with partners. This would include both direct support to families where needed also connecting families with the provision which was available to them. This model could be delivered from within existing resources during the current financial year.

The Chair asked that her thanks to the Service Director for Education and his team in managing the summer holiday voucher scheme should be placed on record.

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

- expressed their thanks to the local community voluntary groups which had mobilised to offer support to those in need and to the officers for their recognition of the important role played by district councils
- commented that there was a need to be realistic about the level of volunteer support which would be available in the longer term. The Executive Director: People and Communities stated that a community resource group had been established comprising over 50 groups from a variety of sectors. She acknowledged that the volunteer bank might be smaller, but the continuation of this group evidenced a continuing commitment
- asked officers how confident they were that the proposed support model would be as straight-forward to access as the voucher scheme had been. The Service Director for Education stated that, if approved, a good communications plan would be important. However, the new support model would have the advantage of building on an existing brand and all previous communications had referenced the County Hub so levels of awareness should already be good. The single front door to services offered by the County Hub was seen as particularly advantageous
- expressed concern at the need for the chief executive to exercise her emergency powers and expressed the opinion that the committee should meet more frequently. The Service Director for Education stated that this was an exceptional situation whereby officers had not been notified of the grant in time for the decision to be brought before the committee. To delay the decision would have meant the vouchers not being issued in time
- noted the significant sums that had been spent on the voucher schemes, most of which had come from Government, and asked about managing expectation going forward. Officers stated that there had been a lot of questions from parents around whether the voucher schemes would continue. The focus was on making sure that families knew where they could go to get help if they needed it. Given the recent positive news about the economy and jobs market it was hoped that demand for support might reduce, although a core need might remain. The Executive Director: People and Communities stated that providing a low level of support at the root cause of a problem could avoid the need for future specialist interventions which were both less positive for families and more expensive

- asked who the key partners would be for the direct award scheme. Officers stated that the expectation was that the Council would connect the public with the services most able to meet their particular needs, such as district and parish councils, the voluntary sector, charities and schools. The direct award scheme would be delivered via grants to known and trusted organisations
- noted that the appendix to the report did not contain any detailed information about the basket of services available in Fenland. Officers undertook to circulate this outside of the meeting **Action**
- asked whether there was an end date to the model of support outlined in recommendation (b). Officers stated that it was an evolving picture and that the timing had intentionally been left open. It might though be timely to review the position after Christmas 2021.

At the Chair's request, the Service Director for Education provided a verbal update on Covid-19 in relation to education. All schools had worked hard in preparation for the start of the new school year. Weekly updates would continue to be provided to Members and contingency frameworks were in place to minimise Covid cases. The number of cases was continuing to be monitored and a rise was expected following the return to school. There was still some use of bubbles and face coverings where clusters of cases existed. The focus was on keeping pupils in school and keeping pupils and staff safe.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the decision made under emergency powers by the Chief Executive of Cambridgeshire County Council to undertake the allocation of supermarket vouchers via Wonde for the summer holiday period.
- b) Endorse the model of support outlined in section 2 to mainstream the Covid support for vulnerable families from October 2021 half term onwards.

Co-opted members of the committee were eligible to vote on this item.

The meeting was adjourned from 4.03 to 4.14pm.

21. Service Director's Report: Children and Safeguarding

The return to school was a positive development, but Children's Services were continuing to see the impact of Covid-19 on families and especially on the most vulnerable. The number of child protection plans had gone up during Covid, but was now starting to level off. Strong progress had been made on the overall improvement journey of the service in recent years, but there were some challenges around the recruitment of agency staff at present. Early help and the family safeguarding model were both having a positive impact, with the number of children in care continuing to reduce and the overall figure now in line with the county's statistical neighbours. However, the number of children in care nationally was continuing to increase which

was creating pressure on the number of placements available, particularly for older children and those with more complex needs. This had impacted on costs, but it was hoped the position would begin to ease as children settled back in to school.

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

- expressed their thanks to the Service Director for Children and Safeguarding and his team for their work during an exceptionally difficult time
- asked whether the Government was planning to relax the regulations around placements. Officers stated that there was no indication of this at present. The Department for Education (DfE) had begun drafting legislation around placements for under 16s that were not registered with Ofsted, but only occasional use of this type of placement was made in Cambridgeshire. The DfE had also indicated that it planned to redraft the regulations on children's homes, but had not yet done so. In a crisis situation it was possible to set up bespoke provision in a day, but it took six months to get Ofsted registration
- asked for more information around recruitment issues. Officers stated that they were working with a couple of district councils around key-worker housing. The service was also about to launch a new dynamic and refreshed campaign around permanent recruitment. Work was continuing with universities and colleges to recruit newly qualified staff and officers were also working with agency providers.

The Committee:

- a) Noted the information relating to the performance of children's services in Cambridgeshire, and;
- b) Noted that while numbers of children in care continue to decline, a number of factors are resulting in an increase in placement costs, and;
- c) Noted the actions being explored to address placement availability for children and young people in care.

22. Business Planning Proposals for 2022-27 – Opening update and overview

The report set out the financial context and emerging pressures which would need to be considered as part of the business planning round.

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

- asked whether fully costed options would be brought to the November meeting. The Service Director for Education stated that a report on capacity in relation to education, health and care plans (EHCPs) would be brought forward. His next service director's report would also include the work done on special educational

needs and disabilities (SEND) costs. There was a need to be realistic about delivering the Council's statutory obligations in relation to SEND whilst looking at the shape of the support provided

- commented that cost avoidance in relations to SEND and EHCPs was not always about cuts to services. It could also be about supporting families early and ensuring that mainstream schools were meeting their own obligations to children with additional needs
- Asked whether the potential savings identified in relation to special guardianship orders would be year on year savings. Officers confirmed that this was the case

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the overview and context provided for the 2022-23 to 26-27 Business Plan.
- b) Comment on the list of proposals (set out in section 5.3) and endorse their development.

Co-opted members were not eligible to vote on this item.

23. Children and Young People Committee Agenda Plan, Training Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Internal Advisory Groups and Panels

The Committee was advised that a number of appointments had been made by the Executive Director: People and Communities since the last committee meeting under delegated authority and in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Children and Young People Committee (CYP) and CYP Spokes. These appointments were shown in italics in the published papers.

The committee was invited to appoint Councillor Philippa Slatter as the Committee's third appointee to the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education.

One vacancy remained for a CYP nominee to the Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Foundation Trust Quarterly Liaison Group. The appointment would be made by the Adults and Health Committee.

The Committee was advised that following Council's decision on 20 July 2021 to accept the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in relation to appointments to the Fostering Panel this would no longer attract a special responsibility allowance. Instead, any elected members appointed to the Fostering Panel would receive the same allowance as other appointees. All Members would be advised of future vacancies on the Fostering Panel and were encouraged to consider whether might want to apply.

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

- asked that training on the work of foster carers should be arranged. Officers advised that this request had already been included on the committee training plan

- asked for clarification of whether the Adults and Health Committee would also be represented on the CCS Quarterly Liaison Group, or whether it would be just CYP's nominees. Action
- expressed interest in an appointment to the Fostering Panel

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the following updates to the committee agenda plan:
 - i. The 19 October 2021 reserve meeting date being confirmed to be used for business planning.
 - ii. 30 November 2021: New item - Approval to tender for Early Years Provision in Cambridgeshire
- b) Note the training plan.
- c) Appoint Councillor P Slatter as the third committee representative on the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
- d) Note verbal updates on committee appointments.

Co-opted members were not eligible to vote on this item.

(Chair)

Children and Young People Committee 14 September 2021 – Public Speaker

	Name	Question/ comments
	James Boyle, local resident	<p>Back in November 2020 the CYP discussed the DfE’s plans to build a new secondary school in Soham under wave 12 of the Free School Programme. At that meeting, Councillors expressed concern over the lack of collaboration between the DfE and the LEA. We now have a similar situation in St Neots where the DfE is proceeding with another wave 12 proposal. Again, there seems to be a lack of communication and collaboration between the DfE and the LEA. CCC officials say were unaware of the DfE plans to proceed until March of this year. The LEA ‘s stance now is that this is a DfE project and that no action is required from the LEA until the project has run its course. I am very concerned by this lack of engagement. Also, the issue has not been put before this committee, denying our recently elected councillors the opportunity to endorse the project or, indeed, to raise any concerns.</p> <p>In order to assess the St Neots Free School project, councillors will want to be in possession of the full facts. It is very disappointing, therefore, that despite assurances of ‘transparency’ at the last CYP meeting in June we are now in September and the Feasibility Study into Secondary School provision in St Neots has still not been published. Also, the latest projected student numbers have been circulated without any supporting evidence or details about the underlying assumptions. These figures need to be subjected to public scrutiny if we are to avoid a repeat of previous errors.</p> <p>One of consequences of the previous errors is a failure to secure any potential funding towards the LEA’s preferred option of expanding the two existing St Neots schools. In April 2019, the LEA requested £22million of CIL funding for this purpose. In that bid, the LEA stated that the expansion project was “essential” and that “if funding is not identified there is a risk that we will not meet our statutory duties and children will be educated in temporary accommodation or bussed to alternative secondary schools potentially a significant distance away.”</p> <p>HDC rejected the proposal out of hand due to lack of detail. The Feasibility Study should provide the missing detail, confirm whether the £22 million figure is accurate and identify any other challenges with this option. As far as I know, the above risk, identified by LEA officers, has not been brought to the attention of the CYP. The failed £22 million bid for an "essential" project has never been mentioned. The</p>

	Name	Question/ comments
		<p>risk of significant additional costs, if the free school option fails, is not mentioned in the Business Planning Proposals for 2022-27 which is on today's agenda. So, again, there is no transparency. Will the committee please confirm that the feasibility study and the detailed student estimates will be made available without further delay and that the issue of secondary school provision in St Neots will be discussed by the CYP at the next available opportunity?</p>
	Name	Response
	<p>Councillor Bryony Goodliffe, Chair, Children and Young People Committee</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. In addition to your question you have raised several points which I will do my best to address.</p> <p>I understand you are concerned that there is a lack of collaboration between the Department for Education (DfE) and Cambridgeshire County Council. I am pleased to inform you that officers from the Council meet bi-monthly with colleagues from the DfE in relation to wider free schools' issues and also have monthly meetings specifically in relation to the St Neots free school. They do this to ensure that there is a joined-up approach and that the Council can provide any information or local area knowledge that is needed.</p> <p>The reason that the matter has not been brought to the Children and Young People Committee is that this Committee is a decision-making body, and as yet there is no decision required in relation to this project. I can though assure you that information has been shared regularly with councillors to make sure that we are up to date with developments.</p> <p>It is also important to remember that the Council has no influence over the Government's central free schools programme and that consideration of the project for approval by this Committee is not required.</p> <p>The feasibility study that you refer to is in its final stages. However, as much of the work was undertaken during COVID restrictions and during a period where schools were under considerable pressure it has understandably taken longer than anticipated.</p> <p>As demographics for St Neots secondary school catchments have changed significantly over the past few years we now believe that there is not a need to increase secondary places in the St Neots area. We have though decided to complete the feasibility study regardless of the falling demographics to ensure that we can respond quickly if there are further changes which would lead to the need to</p>

	Name	Question/ comments
		<p>increase the number of secondary school places in the town. If that proved the case, and if the proposed free school is paused once again, a proposal to increase secondary school places and the related costs - derived from the feasibility study - would be presented to this Committee and to the Capital Programme Board at that time. If approved, the investment necessary to provide the additional places would be included in the Council's business plan.</p> <p>With regard to the funding of the expansion project, I can confirm that a CIL bid was suggested as a possible funding stream for the expansion of secondary provision. Following an initial application in 2018 for CIL funding to Huntingdonshire District Council, who manage and determine priorities for CIL funding, the bid for funding was not resubmitted as we were advised that the level of the request made was likely to exceed the funds available. Since that bid the demographics have changed and the Council is able to continue to meet its statutory duty without an expansion project, so there is no requirement to secure capital funding. The feasibility study will be able to confirm the true cost of an expansion, and should this be required in the future we will look at the various funding options available at that time.</p> <p>With regard to the detailed student forecasts and methodology behind these, these will be shared with you and will also be made available to members of the public who wish to view them.</p>

Item 6: Tender for Early Years Provision in Arbury

Written representations from Councillor Cox Condron, Member for Arbury:

Access to local early years education is vital for many of our Arbury children and their families. As a local councillor, parent and educator with a focus on wellbeing at all ages, I implore the council to consider the need of our youngest residents, their families and our local environment. Preschool provides play, talk, exploration, development of fine and gross motor skills, socialisation and development of relationships. We know this such an important stage of a child's development, but absolutely vital for our children who have missed out so on so much during lockdown . Vital for both our children and for their families. In particular for single parents, those living in poverty and women - Many of whom have had to stop work or been under huge pressure to care for young children at home during the pandemic. Many of whom haven't had access to other parents and families for that additional support vital for their own wellbeing, support and parental development, and many who are living in food poverty.

Local nurseries are such an important part of building communities. The connections made are often the connections that support parents and children throughout the whole of childhood. We have seen the importance of these local connections throughout the pandemic, yet new parents and children in particular have been isolated.

Without continuous provision our children will miss out on play, learning and building connections. They may miss out on fresh food. Our most vulnerable parents living in poverty will have additional stress without the support. Others may lose critical income in a ward which already has a gaping social divide. Those who may travel further afield to access nursery places may now need to drive - adding to the congestion and air pollution at a time when we are committed to reducing car use.

Again, council, I implore you to support continued access to Arbury Preschool