

Children's Services Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 14 November 2017
10am, Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

Present:

Mr S Dark – Acting Chairman

Mr D Collis

Ms E Corlett

Mr J Fisher

Mr R Hanton – Acting Vice-Chairman

Mr E Maxfield

Mr G Middleton

Mr R Price

Mr M Smith-Clare

Mr B Stone

Mrs A Thomas

Mr V Thomson

Mrs S Young

Church Representatives:

Mr P Dunning

The Chairman welcomed the Executive Director of Children's Services, Sara Tough, to her first meeting.

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Chairman, Penny Carpenter was unwell and unable to be present. On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman sent best wishes for a quick recovery.

1 Apologies and substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mrs P Carpenter (Mrs A Thomas substituted).

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the Children's Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 17 October 2017 were agreed as an accurate record by the Committee and signed by the Chairman.
- 2.2 The request at 4.1.3 of the minutes for a report to be brought to the meeting regarding the plan to recommission Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) would be put on the forward plan.

3 Declarations of Interest

Mr V Thomson declared an other interest as his son was subject to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) administered by Norfolk County Council.

Mr R Hanton declared an other interest as his daughter-in-law was a teacher.

Mr S Dark declared an other interest as his sister was a Headteacher at Swaffham and he was a Governor at the West Norfolk Academy.

Mr M Smith-Claire declared an other interest as he was a Governor at Alderman Swindell School.

Mr E Maxfield declared an other interest as he was a Trustee at the Hamlet Charity in Norwich which provides services under contract to Norfolk County Council.

Mr R Price declared an other interest as he had family members who were teachers.

4 Items of Urgent Business

4.1 The Committee **agreed** to consider the urgent item raised by the Chairman in respect of appointing an acting vice-Chairman whilst Mrs P Carpenter was absent. Mr S Dark would act as Chairman.

4.1.1 The Committee **agreed** to appoint Mr R Hanton as acting Vice-Chairman.

4.2 The Committee **agreed** to consider the urgent item raised by the Chairman with regards to a request by the Adult Social Care Committee for two members to join a task and finish group to examine the creation of a Carers Charter.

4.2.1 The Committee **agreed** to appoint Mr M Smith-Claire and Mr G Middleton to the task and finish group.

4.3 The Chairman explained to the Committee that a request to the Communities Committee for information regarding the number of accidents and accidental poisonings that resulted in children being admitted to hospital.

5 Public Question Time

5.1 There had been no public questions submitted.

6 Local Member Issues/Member Questions

6.1 There had been no local member questions submitted.

The Committee **AGREED** to consider the items in the order as listed in these minutes.

7. Developing Norfolk's Education Landscape

7.1 The Committee received the report by the Executive Director of Children's Services

7.2 The Head of Education Participation, Infrastructure and Partnership Service confirmed that one meeting had been held with the recently appointed Regional Schools Commissioner, Sue Baldwin. She had been positive about the invite from the Committee to speak with them, and it would be arranged as soon as convenient.

7.3 Ms E Corlett proposed an amendment to the report at 6.3, seconded by Mr E Maxfield;
"6. Views of the wider community"

With five votes for, six against and one abstention, the proposal was **LOST**.

- 7.4 The Head of Education, Participation, Infrastructure and Partnership Service explained that the financial pressures within further education (FE) establishments were such that centralisation had to take place to ensure that the training provisions that they wanted and needed could be achieved. Work would be undertaken with the FE establishments to support them with the transport needs as a result of the centralisation. There was no timescale for this as implementation rested with the Skills Board of the New Anglia Enterprise Partnership.
- 7.5 There were currently over 100 schools with less than 105 pupils which were making proactive changes through the small schools strategy to ultimately deliver good education. With relation to the new school groupings, schools recognised that they needed to reach a certain size in order to realise sustainability and viability.
- 7.6 Members were concerned at the reduced provision for subjects offered by some sixth form providers and there could potentially be a correlation between the skill demand and the cancelled subjects. The Head of Education Participation, Infrastructure and Partnership Service explained that the subjects at risk were languages, art and music and work was being undertaken to actively broker them.
- 7.7 The Chairman reiterated the views of several members of the committee that there was limited information on the post-16 changes in the report. There were lots of activities taking place in the establishments and it would be useful to have a report detailing the risks, successes etc.
- 7.8 The Executive Director of Children's Services said that it was a well detailed report and she had been impressed at the education teams and hoped it gave Members confidence on the direction of travel for the service.
- 7.9 The Committee **RESOLVED**;
- To note changes to the capital programme since June 2017; and
 - To endorse the emerging priorities for further consideration

8 Vulnerable Child Social Impact Bond

- 8.1 The Committee received the report by the Executive Director of Children's Services which had been presented to and approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 30 October 2017. The report detailed the nature of the Vulnerable Child Social Impact Bond (SIB).
- 8.2 The Project Director for Children's Services Strategic explained that the report had been agreed at Policy and Resources Committee due to the tight deadline to submit the bid. The outcome would be known at the end of January 2018.
- 8.3 The Committee expressed concern that the outcome payments would be made on the reduction in the number of care days actually spent in care for a cohort of children and not personally for the children involved. The benefits highlighted at point 5.6 did not mention a reduction of care days.
- 8.4 Although the main measure of the SIB were the hard data of the reduction of care days, the performance data would include the impact of the SIB on a more personal level.

- 8.5 It was explained to the Committee that if the bid was approved, a commissioning process would be undertaken to find providers with experience of providing the type of interventions that were needed and NCC would seek evidence to prove this. It was confirmed that NCC would not be the provider.
- 8.6 It was noted that during the meeting of Policy and Resources the recommendations had been amended as follows;
“2. Delegate decision-making for procurement and award of contract to the Director of Children’s Services *in consultation with Chairman of Children’s Services Committee*.”
- 8.7 The Project Director for Children’s Services Strategic confirmed that Essex County Council had seen a reduction of Looked After Children and that the focus was primarily for the safety of children and for them to remain at home where it was safe to do so.
- 8.8 The Committee **RESOLVED** to **Note** the report.

9 Schools’ Capital Programme 2017-2020

- 9.1 The Committee received the report by the Executive Director of Children’s Services which updated the Committee with the priorities for the development of the 2018+ capital programme as part of the corporate prioritisation process.
- 9.2 The Head of Place Planning and Organisation drew the Committee’s attention to the new 2019/20 Basic Need (growth) allocation of £25.372m announced for Norfolk since the May Committee report. This would sit alongside current allocations and give confidence for the forward programme to be developed by Capital Priorities Group. He also drew attention to the significant capital demands likely to flow from the developing SEN Strategy; initial development funding had been allocated but the medium to long-term capital implications of this strategy would need careful planning.
- 9.3 Although they were pleased to see thirteen different work schemes being completed in 18/19, the Committee expressed particular delight at the work at Chapel Road School nearing completion. It had been a long process and they were pleased the relocation had happened.
- 9.4 The Committee heard that the reason the basic need allocation fell in 18/19 compared to 17/18 and 19/20 was due to the Education and Skills Funding Agency only counting each pupil once. When a pupil had been counted in year one, they were not considered again. The basic needs allocation was now known three years ahead which allowed for significant better planning.
- 9.5 The Head of Place Planning and Organisation explained that although none of the mentioned budgets were what had been started with, the Capital Priorities Group had continuously been reported to and updated with the details. The significant increase in the budget of the work at Taverham Junior School had been due to potential risk of flooding raised by the planners. This had meant that additional work had to be carried out to increase signs of underground tanks and was being closely monitored.
- 9.6 The Committee **RESOLVED**;
- To note changes to the capital programme since June 2017; and

- To endorse the emerging priorities for further consideration

10 Update on School Exclusions

- 10.1 The Committee received the report by the Executive Director of Children's Services which included a brief outline of the priorities to reduce school exclusions and some key actions by the Local Authority and a summary overview of the year end data and early Autumn term 2017.
- 10.2 The Assistant Director (Education) introduced Mark Adams who had taken on the role of Head of Education Vulnerable Groups Achievement and Access Service.
- 10.3 Although both Breckland and North Norfolk areas had significant changes in exclusion numbers, it was only one or two exclusions that made the change. The Assistant Director explained that the majority of schools only excluded one or two pupils. There were few schools that excluded in large numbers. In these particular cases, the schools in those areas did nothing different.
- 10.4 It was explained to the Committee that schools considered that they have no alternative but to exclude. The work being undertaken with schools was to understand why they considered this cause of action was necessary and why they felt they had no choice. More than two thirds of exclusions were categorised as persistent disruptive behaviour, however the meaning of persistent disruptive behaviour differs within each school. Therefore, it was important to work with the schools to provide challenge and support to the schools to help them become more inclusive.
- 10.5 The Head of Education Vulnerable Groups Achievement and Access Service explained that time was being spent addressing the culture and ethos of schools and ensuring policies were adhered to and applied fairly within the schools. There was evidence to suggest that changing the cultures of schools would reduce the number of exclusions.
- 10.6 Members suggested that the action list at 1.5 was lengthy. The Head of Service explained that this was needed as there were no quick fixes. Actions needed to be co-created with the school system as they needed to build on it and take ownership of it.
- 10.7 It was difficult to say which type of school were more likely to exclude as there had been different trends in the past. The ten highest excluding schools tended to be high schools but primary schools were proactively being worked with.
- 10.8 The Assistant Director emphasised that the target of exclusions had to be zero. Norfolk had a very open and transparent system of knowing about every child as soon as they were at risk. Norfolk were proud of the fact that no LAC child had been excluded in the last year.
- 10.9 The Committee **RESOLVED**;
- To note the contents of the report; and
 - Endorse the actions advocated in relation to the Local Authority role in intervention, challenge and support for the reduction of school exclusions.

11 Forward Plan

This item had been removed from the agenda and it was agreed that it would be brought to the next meeting.

12 Children's Services Finance Monitoring Report Period 6 (September) 2017-18

- 12.1 The Committee received the report by the Executive Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the performance and financial outturn information for the 2017-18 financial year. It set out the financial outturn data for the period ending 31 March 2018 as at the end of September 2017 (period 6).
- 12.2. The Executive Director of Children's Services confirmed that the budget was in line with other authorities especially with the growing impact of those children with SEND, for whom work and the associated expenditure was being particularly planned around. The Association of Directors of Children's Services was trying to understand the national picture in order to be able to talk to Ministers about the financial pressures.
- 12.3 Concern was expressed by Members that £9million had been put into the revenue budget of Children's Services to offset the overspend, however in this financial year it was still overspent and seemed to be increasing with each report. There was no detail of the management action that was being taken for Members' information. The Assistant Director for Performance and Challenge explained the advocacy service was now offered to LAC, as well as those with Child Protection Plans, after it had been mentioned by Ofsted that it was not used enough for LAC. This had resulted in the expenditure of advocacy rising by 25%. There was more narrative needed to explain the rise in expenditure in some areas of the report to reassure Members that the budget was being spent on where it was needed. The Executive Director gave assurance that the entire budget was continuously reviewed to ensure monies were being spent effectively within the parameters given.
- 12.4 The Chairman confirmed that there were concerns across the political spectrum with regards to the overspend and expressed that it would be helpful to have the detail that was being taken to Policy and Resources Committee to consider.
- 12.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Agree the forecast outturn position at period 6 for the 2017-18 Revenue budget for both the Local Authority Budget and School Budget.
 - Agree the planned use of reserves.
 - Agree the forecast outturn position at period 6 for the 2017-18 Capital Programme.

Thanks were expressed to Don Evans and Chris Hey for their time in their roles and for their hard work, and best wishes were sent for the future.

The meeting closed at 12.20pm.

Chairman



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