

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 16 September 2014
2:00pm Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich

Mr J Joyce (Chair)

Mr P Gilmour
Mr M Kiddle-Morris
Mrs J Leggett
Mr J Perkins
Mr E Seward
Mr R Smith
Miss J Virgo

Mr A Mash

Dr K Byrne Mrs S Vertigan

Mrs A Best-White

Mr A Robinson	Norfolk Governors Network
Ms V Aldous	Primary Education
Ms C Smith	Secondary Education

1.1 Apologies were received from Tom Garrod (Bill Borrett substituted); Tina Humber (non-voting co-opted advisor SEN) and Helen Bates (Church Representative).

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to paragraph 6.2, first bullet point being amended to read:

- The key to reducing the overspend in the SEN Transport category would be to educate SEN children as near to home as possible, although it was

noted that a cultural change around the inclusion of SEN children in all schools and settings would be required before this could happen.

3 Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest from Members of the Committee.

The Interim Director of Children's Services stated that, as she would be making a delegated decision with regard to agenda item 13 (Commentary on results of a statutory consultation on a proposal to close King George VI School in Great Bircham), she would not be taking any part in the debate when that item was discussed by the Committee.

4 Items of Urgent Business

- 4.1 The Chairman reminded the Committee that a Children's Services Budget workshop would be held at 10am on 24 September 2014.

- 4.2 Members of Children's Services Committee had been invited to attend a briefing on the restructuring of the Children's Services Department which would commence after the committee meeting.

- 4.3 The Interim Director of Children's Services agreed to circulate a summary of the key findings from the Independent Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham. The Interim Director also confirmed that the Chief Constable, the Chairman of the Safeguarding Board (David Ashcroft) and herself had considered the findings in the report and carried out a check to ensure Norfolk had the right controls in place to manage incidents.

The Interim Director confirmed that no children from Norfolk had been moved to Rotherham and that no staff from that area were working for Norfolk County Council.

Members of the Committee requested a training session on child sexual exploitation, and their attention was drawn to a course on 7 November at the Mercure Hotel, Norwich on child sexual exploitation which was being run by the Safeguarding Board.

- 4.4 The Interim Director of Children's Services updated the Committee on the recent media story about allegations of schools being notified of the date of Ofsted inspections. The Interim Director said that following receipt of the complaint she had written to Sir Michael Wilshaw expressing her concern and seeking reassurance that a full investigation would be carried out. The Interim Director confirmed that, although she had received an acknowledgement, no timescale as to when the investigation would be complete had been provided. The Interim Director would update the committee when further information was received.
- 4.5 The Assistant Director, Education Strategy and Commissioning, Children's Services updated the Committee on the successful launch of the free school meal initiative for all reception, year 1 and year 2 children.

5 Local Member Issues/Member Questions

- 5.1 Although no Local Member Questions had been received, the Committee received two written submissions; one from Cllr Michael Chenery of Horsbrugh and a letter from the Diocese in respect of King George VI School in Great Bircham.

- 6 The Committee **AGREED** to consider agenda item 13 (Commentary on results of a statutory consultation on a proposal to close King George VI School in Great Bircham) as its next item of business.

7 Commentary on results of a statutory consultation on a proposal to close King George VI School in Great Bircham.

- 7.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services setting out the proposal to close King George VI School in Great Bircham in detail and summarising the responses to the public consultation.

- 7.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:

- A predicted forecast until 2020 had shown that approximately 33 houses would be built within the catchment area, indicating that 8 children of primary school age could be expected to move into the village. The current situation was that under the parental preference arrangements, children eligible to attend King George VI school were choosing to attend larger schools in the surrounding area.
- If a decision was taken to close the school after the consultation period, there were a number of options available which could allow the buildings to be used by the local community.
- As soon as the governors had taken the decision to move children to Docking school, a letter had been sent to parents. It was confirmed that the letter had been sent to parents before the consultation period had commenced.
- The Committee was reassured that all possible options had been explored before an agreement was reached to consult on school closure and that the options contained within the consultation document constituted a sustainable and viable proposal.
- The outline strategy for the consultation had been discussed and agreed by the Small Schools Steering Group.
- At the time of publishing the committee report, a total of 30 children could have been enrolled at King George VI school. Six of these children were enrolled at Great Bircham school, with the remaining 24 children receiving their education at other schools in the surrounding area. Eight children were attending King George VI school from other areas and these children

were being transported to the school by their parents.

7.3 ≠ The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- Note the contents of the report.
- Recommend that the Director of Children's Services, using delegated powers, publishes a formal notice to propose the closure of King George VI School in Great Bircham.

≠ It was agreed that this minute be amended and was corrected at the committee meeting on 15 October 2014. Please view the minutes of that meeting in order to note the correction made.

8 Children's Services Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring report for 2014-15.

8.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services providing an update on performance and finance monitoring information for the 2013-14 financial year. The report set out evidence of improvements and trends for a range of measures and indicators within children's social care services support for school improvement and children's services finances.

8.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:

- The Committee were informed that the schools risk assessment criteria had not changed in the last year, although the focus had moved to vulnerable groups.
- Norfolk County Council had recently appointed a Curriculum Officer and one of the key areas of responsibility would be to work with families to highlight the importance of children's literacy.
- Children's Services was carrying out an analysis exercise of staff sickness statistics and to ensure that there was a consistent approach in providing support for members of staff. The Committee was reassured that a lot of work had been done to reduce the caseloads of social workers in Children's Services and that the current average caseload per social worker was in the region of 20 to 25 cases. This compares against the average caseload of between 50 and 60 cases per social worker 18 months ago. Support and counselling was available to any member of staff who appeared to be struggling with their workload.
- The usual referral time for a case to be received by a social worker was 72 hours.
- Children's Services department was in the process of utilising the red, amber, green (RAG) rating for risk management and future reports to the Committee would include this RAG rating, as well as mitigating factors and

actions taken. Members were reassured that the information contained within the risk register was reviewed and updated regularly.

8.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the information contained in the report, in particular:-

- The recent Ofsted inspection of Support for School Improvement which had resulted in an 'Effective' judgement.
- The new arrangements for Risk Rating schools in the county.
- Indicators that showed improved social care performance and some which showed movement downwards.
- The improved position on the cost of looked after children and the continued focus that was still required.
- The continued pressure on special education needs home to school transport.

9 Norfolk County Council Adoption Agency Annual Review

9.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Head of Children's Services setting out the Statement of Purpose.

9.2 The Interim Director of Children's Services informed and apologised to the Committee, that the recommendations contained within the report had been incorrect. A copy of the updated recommendations was handed out at the meeting.

9.3 The following responses to questions from the Committee were noted:

- The Norfolk Adoption Service was run by the Local Authority. Other Voluntary adoption organisations were not based in Norfolk.
- 92% of those people wishing to become adopters were approved within six months of making an initial inquiry.

9.4 The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend approval of the statement of purpose to full Council and provide scrutiny and challenge to the adoption service

10 Statement of Purpose of Norfolk's Fostering Services Annual Review

10.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services setting out the Statement of Purpose.

10.2 In response to a question from the Committee, it was noted that a child who was placed in an agency foster care home would incur costs which were significantly higher than those for a child who stayed within the Norfolk Fostering service. The Interim Director of Children's Services agreed to let Committee Members have details of the exact costs.

10.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend approval of the statement of purpose to full Council and provide scrutiny and challenge to the adoption service

11 Annual Review of Norfolk Residential Service

- 11.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services providing members with the performance and outcomes achieved by the Norfolk Residential Service.
- 11.2 In response to a question from the Committee it was noted that the length of stay for people using the Norfolk Residential Service varied according to an individual's needs. Flats were occupied by young people who needed support to help them to adapt when moving from care to independent living.
- 11.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend the approval of the Statements of Purpose and Functions for all the Local Authority children's homes to full Council to comply with the Care Standards Act 2000.
- 12** The Vice-Chairman of the Committee presented certificates to Jane Kett and Tracy Whitaker who had recently achieved an Aspiring Leaders Programme Certificate from Virtual Staff College (VSC). The Committee offered their congratulations to Jane and Tracey on achieving their certificates.

13 Joint Safeguarding Arrangements

- 13.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services and the Director of Community Services highlighting how the Council could improve the Council-wide response to safeguarding activity. The report set out how Children's Services and Adult Services could work together to effectively discharge the Council's safeguarding responsibilities, develop joint approaches to learning and development and develop a greater awareness of the fact that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- The Committee welcomed David Ashcroft, Chairman of the Safeguarding Board to the meeting.
- 13.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
- The Terms of Reference should be updated to include a Mission Statement setting out the aims and objectives of the Member Safeguarding Forum.
 - The Committee requested that the Membership of the Member Safeguarding Forum should not be restricted to 4 Members. The Interim Director agreed to feed this back to the Director of Community Services.
- 13.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to
- Commit to the development of a shared Council wide approach to safeguarding work and to consider whether on an annual basis there should be a joint member seminar on council wide safeguarding work.
 - Endorse the five priorities in the report and to recognise the fundamental

shift in collaboration across Children's Services and Adult Services.

- Agree to set up a Member Safeguarding Forum, consisting of Members from both Children's Services and Adult Social Care Committees.
- Support the setting up of a whole council officer forum to raise the profile of safeguarding across the Council.

14 Response to Looked After Children Reduction Strategy.

- 14.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services providing an update on the progress made so far in implementing the Looked After Children (LAC) reduction strategy.
- 14.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the progress made to date and endorse the approach being taken to scale-up performance.

15 Children's Services Committee Plan

- 15.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services presenting the revised Children's Services Committee Plan. The Plan had been developed since the Committee's last meeting in July to respond to members' feedback about the need to highlight the Committee's new ways of working.

- 15.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:

- The Interim Director identified the lead senior officers for the Task and Finish Groups:

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- Children's Services – Andrew Haley, Assistant Director Social Care.
 - Looked After Children – Michael Rosen, (Interim Assistant Director (Early Help).
 - Variations in Educational Attainment by District – Gordon Boyd, Assistant Director, Education Strategy and Commissioning, Children's Services.

≠ It was agreed that this minute be amended and was corrected at the committee meeting on 15 October 2014. Please view the minutes of that meeting in order to note the correction made.

- Members of the Committee were encouraged to attend a briefing for all three Task and Finish Groups and then select which Group they wished to participate in.

- 15.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree the revised Committee Plan, and

- Agree the approach to task and finish in-depth reviews described on pages 7 to 8 of the report.
- Agree the approach to the budget workshops as detailed on page 8

- of the report.
- Confirm the challenges listed on pages 13 to 15 of the Plan.

2. Note the draft terms of reference for the three task and finish in-depth reviews (also noting that the detail of these would be reviewed at the first meeting of each group, to ensure a maximum impact for children and young people).

16 Consultation on proposed changes to the School Admissions Code 2012

- 16.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services setting out the details of the Department for Education consultation on changes to the statutory school admissions code. The Committee was asked to comment on the proposals so a response could be submitted to the DfE.
- 16.2 The Committee asked Children's Services to draft the response and circulate to Members for their comments prior to it being submitted to the DfE by 29 September 2014.
- 16.3 The Committee asked to receive further details about the pupil premium strategy at a future meeting.
- 16.4 The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the report.

17 Exemption to Contract Standing Orders for Speech and Language Therapy

- 17.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services setting out the details of an exemption to Contract Standing Orders agreed by the Head of Procurement to allow continuation of the current contracts with Norfolk Community Health and Care and East Coast Community Health for a further year.
- 17.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to note that the exemption had been signed off by the Assistant Head of Procurement.

18 Any Other Business

- 18.1 The Committee asked the Chairman to arrange for a log of Committee decisions made to be established and maintained and circulated to Members. The log to include all urgent decisions made on behalf of the Committee between Committee meetings by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

The meeting closed at 5.45 pm.

CHAIRMAN



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