



## **People and Communities Select Committee** **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 15 September 2023 at 10am** **In the Council Chamber, County Hall**

### **Present:**

Cllr Fran Whymark (Chair)  
Cllr Sharon Blundell                      Cllr Brenda Jones  
Cllr Claire Bowes                        Cllr Brian Long  
Cllr John Crofts                         Cllr Mike Smith-Clare  
Cllr Michael Dalby

### **Substitute Members Present**

Cllr Catherine Rowett for Cllr Paul Neale  
Cllr Michael Chenery for Cllr Ed Connolly

### **Others Present**

Hollie Adams	Committee Officer
Michael Bateman	Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnerships
Christopher Butwright	Assistant Director Public Health Prevention & Policy
Craig Chalmers	Director of Community Social Work
Nick Clinch	Assistant Director Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning
Jonathan Hall	Committee Support Manager
Cllr Alison Thomas	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services
Phil Watson	Director of Family Help and High Needs
James Wilson	Director for Sufficiency Planning and Education Strategy

## **1. Apologies for Absence**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Vice Chair Cllr Ed Connolly (Cllr Michael Chenery of Horsburgh substituting), Cllr Paul Neale (Cllr Catherine Rowett substituting) and Cllr Julian Kirk.

## **1b Election of Vice-Chair**

- 1b.1 In the absence of the Vice-Chair, the Select Committee elected a Committee Member to sit as Vice-Chair for the meeting. Cllr Mike Smith-Clare was elected to sit as Vice-Chair for the meeting.

## **2. Minutes of last meeting**

- 2.1 The minute of the meeting held on 14 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

- 3.1 Cllr Michael Dalby declared a non-pecuniary interest related to Item 7 of the agenda, as he would be attending a placement at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital.

- 3.2 Cllr Mike Smith-Clare declared a non-pecuniary interest as he ran a training provider which supported SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) provision.

#### **4. Items received as urgent business**

- 4.1 There was no urgent business.

#### **5. Public Questions**

- 5.1 No public questions were received.

#### **6. Member Questions and Issues**

- 6.1 No member questions were received.

#### **7. Integrated winter plan**

- 7.1.1 The Select Committee received the report providing information on work being undertaken to support a resilient system able to face the impact of the 2023/24 winter on health and wellbeing, and the specific role of Norfolk County Council in that preparedness. It highlights the developing winter framework with key initiatives that will help our population live as healthy life as possible during winter.

- 7.1.2 The Assistant Director of Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning introduced the report to the Select Committee:
- The winter plan set out the plans for the upcoming winter, taking on board learning from the previous year, which included an increase in demand in urgent care and the care system, high demand for home care support and pressure around keeping people well. Similar pressures were expected this year.
  - Increased national priorities were detailed in the report and the overarching plan.
  - Local priorities were in place to support residents to stay well and prevent admissions to hospital where possible, which were detailed in the report and overarching plan.
  - To address the expected impact of Covid-19 and flu on the workforce the vaccination programme had been brought forward.
  - The framework would be adapted if changes in policy were brought forward over the winter period.
  - The Winter Plan would also be taken to the Integrated Care Partnership to look at the wider role in the care system and close working with the NHS.

- 7.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services encouraged Committee Members to raise their concerns so that she could share them with the Integrated Care Partnership. She noted the importance of emergency plans helping Councillors, Parish Councils and community organisations could support vulnerable people in winter for example during bad weather. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services hoped that the vaccination programme would be able to be rolled out to carers to reduce the risk of infection to those who they cared for and visited. The Assistant Director of

Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning confirmed that carers were included in the Covid-19 booster vaccination programme.

- More information was requested on how mental health would be prioritised; The Director of Community Social Work replied that some of the actions set out in the report were already taking place such as the fast track discharge from Julian Hospital and fast track for people to receive money for heating. There was a national mental health crisis and due to demand, some of the interventions did not have the impact needed. The Director of Community Social Work **suggested** a briefing note be prepared for Committee Members with information on the new schemes being taken forward.
- The Assistant Director of Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning confirmed that connections were being made with the resilience team and forums to mitigate energy pressures, ensuring there were plans in place. Officers were planning forward for challenges in capacity by putting in additional capacity in intermediate provision such as reablement.
- Some Committee Members felt that there was not enough detail in the report. The Assistant Director of Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning clarified that this was an overarching plan, and a other work took place alongside it. The Assistant Director of Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning **agreed** to provide more information on work taking place alongside the overarching plan in the briefing to be provided by The Director of Community Social Work.
- The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services agreed to raise the action plan accompanying the overarching plan when the Winter Plan was discussed at the Integrated Care Partnership.
- A Committee member raised concerns about the risk assessment, stating they felt it should include information about unforeseen future epidemics, unusually severe weather, energy scarcity and prevention of mental health admissions via addressing poverty and inequalities. The Assistant Director of Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning replied that the department had invested in Occupational Therapists working in districts and working with District, Borough and City councils, and would look at their wider role across the winter period. The Assistant Director of Public Health Prevention & Policy added that the Health Security Agency monitored and planned for unknown health risks, with immediate actions spoken about and locally in place such as the vaccination programme. The UK Health Security Agency also worked locally to help plan in advance of future risks.
- The waits seen in Accident and Emergency departments this year were raised, and the importance of working with NHS partners and districts to address delayed discharges to help impact on this.
- The Director of Community Social Work **agreed** to include practice examples in the briefing paper.
- The closure of Benjamin Court and possible closure of Grays Fair Court was noted and information on the impact of this was requested. Information on this would be **added** to the briefing note.

### 7.3

#### The Select Committee

- received the report on the draft Integrated Winter Plan for 2023/24 and offered guidance and comment on the council's winter planning.
- suggested that more detail be taken to the Integrated Care Partnership on the Integrated Winter Plan.

## **8. SEND & Alternative Provision (SEND & AP) Policy & Inspection Framework, inc. Local First Inclusion Programme**

8.1.1 The Select Committee received the report outlining information on the Local First Inclusion programme and sets out the information provided to Scrutiny Committee in May 2023.

8.1.2 The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnerships, and the Director for Sufficiency Planning and Education Strategy introduced the report to the Committee:

- A briefing on this topic was taken to Scrutiny Committee earlier this year.
- The report provided the intention of the work and the scope moving forward.
- The diagram at paragraph 2.1 of the report explained the programme which was an invest to improve approach to strengthen the system at all levels and reduce the dependency of the independent sector.
- There would be 5 workstreams, and these were shown on page 35 of the report.
- This programme would secure £70m of external funding and the Council would also add £20m towards it. The Department for Education would add a further undefined amount of money towards the programme.
- This programme would take 6 years to complete.

8.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- Officers clarified that reference in the report to years 4,5 and 6 was the years of the programme. Investment in advisory support to schools would help them build their skills and would not need to be ongoing.
- There was funding for two more special schools. For the new school built in Great Yarmouth for social and emotional difficulties, the average travel time saved was 10miles each way, per journey. Across the three schools built so far the cumulative impact was approximately £200,000 on the school transport budget. When the schools were full this was forecast to be around £1.3m per year, benefiting the budget but also the children who would not have to travel as far to school.
- Officers would review use of funding to ensure investment provided the right amount of special schools as well as supporting mainstream schools.
- Officers were asked what a council measure of good outcomes for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities were. It was confirmed that this would include individual children's goals being met, as well as state funded schools providing value for money and consistent support in mainstream schools.
- The Government's goal to reduce Educational Health and Care plans (EHCPs) by 20% was queried. Officers clarified that EHCPs would allow a child to access a special school but were not required to attend a Special Resource Base or get support funding.
- Identified issues with consistency of support for children based on location was raised. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnerships, reported that improvements had been made in norfolk, with standards being developed on provision expected for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities support. Nearly all mainstream schools were signed up to this.
- The specialist education provision for children aged 16 and over was queried. Officers clarified that stated funded special education was for children aged 3-19 with complex needs. Other special schools ceased education at 16, but

some allowed the children to stay for a year or two longer to support transitions. There were no specialist colleges in Norfolk for post 16 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities education however some had their own in-house provision for example there were specialist classes at City College for young people with autism.

- Concerns were raised that some communication implied that Special Educational Needs and Disabilities could be “cured”. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnerships, replied that the department knew this was not the case, although recognised that if picked up early, some needs such as speech and language could be addressed.
- The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnerships, clarified that when the council was negotiating with the Department for Education about Local First Inclusion it was not allowed to co-produce with families. The area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities strategy was co-produced with families and carers; Local First Inclusion included aspects raised by families and carers through other pieces of work.
- It was clarified that Family Voice were an independent organisation and did not represent the County Council.
- Due to recruitment challenges in speech and language therapy at that time, speech and language therapists helped train staff in early years settings and schools so that these staff could carry out support which did not need therapist intervention

### 8.3 The Select Committee:

- a. Noted and discussed the programme of work detailed within this report, known as Local First Inclusion, including the overall strategy, providing feedback and recommendations where appropriate
- b. Noted and discussed the key risks and mitigations of this programme given the system-wide and transformative nature of it, providing feedback and recommendations where appropriate
- c. Agreed the proposed programme of annual reports to Scrutiny committee and bi-annual reports to the People and Communities Select Committee

## 9. Children’s Social Care Review and Norfolk Response – Phase of Change

9.1.1 The Select Committee received the report giving an update on the details of the recently published Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy, outlining reforms for children’s social care

9.1.2 The Select Committee heard a presentation from the Director of Family Help and High Needs; please see appendix A of these minutes.

### 9.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- A Committee Member asked where in the West of Norfolk this project would be focussed. The Director of Family Help and High Needs clarified that the same boundaries would be followed that children’s social care had been following and aligned with District Council boundaries. There were currently 6 localities, one of which covered the west of the county.
- A Committee member welcomed the approach of working with the whole family. Officers confirmed that this change aimed to reduce silo working; social workers were keen to put this in place, and officers felt this would further improve partnership working. Positive changes had been seen over

the pilot of this approach so far and an evaluation would be carried out at the end of the pilot.

- The Director of Family Help and High Needs **agreed** that a further report could be provided to the committee when more information was known on the funding and to provide feedback on the pilot.
- It was confirmed that translators were available for families who did not speak English as a first language.
- The Chair asked if the location of help hubs would be considered as part of location of teams; The Director of Family Help and High Needs confirmed that this would be the case to help develop local relationships and understanding of local need.

9.3 The Select Committee **AGREED** to:

1. Endorse the principle of increased multi-disciplinary working between key agencies working with children and families in Norfolk.
2. Endorse our response to the proposed reforms.
3. Endorse our aim to become a pathfinder authority, if the opportunity is open to Norfolk, as defined in the Stable Families, Built on Love Strategy
4. Endorse our approach to explore other pathfinder opportunities, for example the regional pathfinder for Fostering Recruitment and Retention
5. receive a further report when more information was known on the funding position and with feedback on the pilot, in approximately March 2024, date to be agreed.

## 10. Forward Work Programme

10.1 Select Committee discussed the forward work programme.

10.2.1 The short breaks programme would be added to the forward work programme.

10.2.2 The Recreational Drugs report would be moved to January 2024

10.2.3 It was requested that the report on vaping coming to the January 2024 meeting remain on the forward plan for this meeting.

10.3 Select Committee **AGREED** the forward plan with the changes noted above.

The Meeting Closed at 12:12pm

, Chairman,

People and Communities Select Committee