

## **Children's Services Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 12 May 2015  
10am Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

### **Present:**

Mr J Joyce - Chairman

Mr A Adams  
Mr R Bearman (Vice-Chair)  
Mrs J Chamberlin  
Mr D Collis  
Ms E Corlett  
Mr D Crawford  
Mr T Garrod  
Mr P Gilmour

Mr H Humphrey  
Mr M Kiddle-Morris  
Mr B Long  
Mr J Perkins  
Mr E Seward  
Mr R Smith  
Miss J Virgo

### **Church Representatives**

Mr A Mash

### **Non-voting Parent Governor Representatives**

Mrs K Byrne

### **Non-Voting Co-opted Advisors**

Mr A Robinson	Norfolk Governors Network
Mrs C Smith	Secondary Education

## **1 Apologies and substitutions**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mr B Spratt (Mr T Garrod substituted); Mr A White (Mr H Humphrey substituted); Ms D Gihawi; Mrs S Vertigan (Parent Governor Rep); Mrs A Best-White (Schools Forum Rep) and Mr J Mason (Post 16 Education Rep).

## **2 Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2015 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.
- 2.2 Due to the length of the meeting, the Committee placed on record its thanks to the Committee Officer in the production of the minutes.
- 2.3 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2015 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

## **2.3 Matters arising**

- 2.3.1 The updated issues log from the previous meetings would be circulated as soon as possible.
- 2.3.2 A training programme on understanding, interrogating and interpreting school data to understand the variations in educational attainment by district was being prepared. It was anticipated that this training would be held in June and July.

## **3 Declarations of Interest**

- 3.1 Mr B Long declared an other interest as his wife was a mid-day supervisory assistant at a school.

## **4 Items of Urgent Business**

- 4.1 The Interim Executive Director of Children's Services updated the Committee on the latest position with regard to the Hewett School. The Interim Executive Board (IEB) were finalising details of the consultation and had asked the Interim Executive Director and the Chairman of Children's Services Committee for their views. The minutes from the meeting held on 17 March would be used to feed back to the IEB and the Interim Executive Director agreed to keep the Committee updated on any developments.
- 4.2 Members were advised that the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services had sought assurance from the IEB that standards for the current pupils at the school were being maintained whilst the decision on the future of the school was awaited. She reassured Members that the Authority was regularly challenging the IEB to ensure this remained the case.

## **5 Local Member Issues/Member Questions**

- 5.1 No Local Member questions were received.

## **6 Children's Services Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report**

- 6.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services providing an update on operational performance within Children's Services including Support for School Improvement, Social Care and Safeguarding and finance monitoring information for the 2014/15 financial year. The report also set out financial monitoring data for the period ending 31 March 2015 as well as the variations between the approved budget for 2014/15 and the actual spending during the year. The paper included an update on the Children's Services Revenue Budget, Capital Budget, School Balances and Children's Services Reserves and Provisions.
- 6.2 **Early Help, Child Protection Services and Services for Looked After Children**

- 6.2.1 The committee was reassured that health assessments for all looked after children would be carried out whenever possible. If young adults did not wish to have a health assessment, every appropriate effort would be made to ensure their health needs were met.
- 6.2.2 Part of the work of the Leaving Care Service was to focus on areas where the service was not working properly. Pathway Planning was acknowledged as a key area where more focus was required and Members were reassured that work was taking place to ensure that discussions were held with young people about their future and that pathway plans were put in place for all looked after children who were due to leave the service.
- 6.2.3 The Interim Executive Director informed the Committee that she had attended the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting in April where a debate had taken place around how Clinical Commissioning Groups provided health assessments for looked after children and how this service could be improved in future.

The Committee asked the Chairman to write to all Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's), on behalf of the Children's Services Committee, asking them for their assurance that they would co-operate in the provision of health assessments for all looked after children.

- 6.2.4 The reference in the report to the fact that 21% of families had not benefited from the early help programme, related to seven families. The Committee noted that one family had now moved out of Norfolk and six families had chosen to disengage from the programme, which was a voluntary programme. In areas where the early help offer was working well, the excellent work provided by good community volunteers was recognised.
- 6.2.5 The Committee was reassured that a representative from Children's Services attended every exclusion hearing and that schools worked hard to accommodate problematic children, although it was an area that needed more focus and remained a priority area for the service.

The Inclusion Service worked with schools and families to provide early help for those families which had been identified as struggling to cope. It was hoped the new Inclusion Service would also provide help when consideration was being given to excluding children to prevent difficult children moving from school to school.

The early help performance showed that the level of referrals was significantly increasing month on month and in the quarter since January 2015, an increase of 228 referrals into the early help family focus had been seen, which indicated that the support for families provided by the early help service was reaching the right users.

- 6.2.6 Schools were required to publish how they spent their free school meal money and Children's Services was currently considering how those best practice schools could share information with other schools to help improve outcomes.

- 6.2.7 Any school which had a concern about a difference in a child's behaviour or a drop in attendance could refer that child to Children's Services for an assessment. Each case would be assessed and any appropriate action taken.
- 6.2.8 The committee noted that the contract awarded to the third-party provider, who had been contracted to carry out Initial Assessments on behalf of the County Council and had not met the required standards, had been terminated.
- 6.2.9 The acronym CIN stood for Children in Need. The Director made it clear that future reports would not contain acronyms.
- 6.2.10 Good progress was being made with the restructuring of the Children's Services department and it was hoped that the new structure would be fully implemented by September 2015.

### 6.3 **Financial Performance**

- 6.3.1 The Committee was reassured that mitigating strategies were in place to bring the budget back on target for each of the areas currently showing an overspend. Members noted that it was difficult to forecast the budget due to the unpredictability of the demand in some areas.
- 6.3.2 Members requested that the tables set out in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 of the report be amalgamated into one table to allow easier readability.
- 6.4 The Committee **NOTED** the report.

## 7 **Signs of Safety Policy Statement and Outcome Framework Update**

- 7.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services providing an update on the current position regarding the signs of safety outcomes framework.
- 7.2 Members were reminded that a half-day training session on Signs of Safety would take place on Wednesday 27 May at 10am in the Edwards room, County Hall and the Chairman urged all Members of the Committee to attend if possible. An additional training session would be arranged for those members unable to attend on 27 May. There was also an additional 2 day training session available for those Members who wanted more in-depth knowledge about the topic.
- 7.3 The Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to formally adopt the Signs of Safety Policy Statement and **NOTED** the current position with regard to the Signs of Safety Outcomes Framework.

## 8 **Working together to support young carers and families.**

- 8.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services. From 1 April 2015, the Children and Families Act 2014 and The Care Act 2014 introduced new duties for Local Authorities to adopt a whole family

approach to the identification, needs assessment and provision of support to young carers, young adult carers and their families. The report set out the progress made to date in responding to the new duties and made proposals to support the strategic plans for ongoing implementation.

- 8.2 If the Committee agreed the recommendations set out in the report, they would be presented to the next meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Norfolk Safeguarding Children's Board for endorsement.
- 8.3 Discussions with Adult Social Care (ASC), to improve joint working across Directorates in respect of young carers and families would take place over the next few weeks.
- 8.4 The setting up of a Task and Finish Group was in response to the recommendations made by Young Carers Forum in the "Getting our Voices Heard" consultation.
- 8.5 The Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group would be to respond to the recommendations and requests made by the Young Carers Forum to Norfolk County Council during the consultation process.
- 8.6 The age of a young carer was clarified as between the ages of 16 and 25.
- 8.7 Norfolk County Council had a duty to identify and support young carers and schools could offer assistance in this respect by identifying any young person whose work or attendance at school appeared to be failing and ensuring that such cases were passed to the appropriate teams for following up.
- 8.8 The Committee **agreed** that the Task and Finish Group should be a joint group with Adult Social Care to consider the recommendations made by Norfolk Young Carers Forum "Getting our Voices Heard".
- 8.9 The Committee considered the report and **AGREED** that:
  - The Committee endorsed the principles of the approach as set out in the report.
  - The Director of Children's Services ensures that young carers, young adult carers and their families were a specific twelve month focus in the plans of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board and its sub-groups;
  - There was a similar discussion with the Norfolk Safeguarding Children's Board and the health and Wellbeing Board as to how they would prioritise the needs of young carers in their respective plans.
  - The Chair of Children's Services Committee works with the Chair of Adult Social Care Committee to improve joint working across Directorates in respect of young carers and families.

- The Assistant Director of Early Help engaged in a review of multi-agency commissioned services for young carers and their families.
- The Assistant Director of Education provided a strategy and action plan to achieve the improved identification, attendance, attainment, achievement and support of young carers by Norfolk's Education Service, Early Years providers, schools and colleges as part of the new inclusion service.
- Public Health be asked to update the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in respect of young carers and families.
- The Director of Children's Services worked with the Chair of NSCB to deliver a programme of specialist multi-agency training and workforce development activities in 2015.
- A Joint Task and Finish Group with Adult Social Care be appointed to consider the recommendations made by Norfolk Young Carers Forum "Getting our voices heard" (as set out in section 5 of the report as a background paper).

## 9 **Developing the children's system in Norfolk – working across the partnership**

- 9.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services setting out how existing arrangements would be strengthened and recommending the streamlining and refocusing of the work of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board, specifying its relationship with the Health and Wellbeing Board and clarifying the accountability and oversight provided by the Norfolk Safeguarding Children's Board. The report also suggested a methodology for continuous improvement that developed from effective planning for children as a whole partnership system. The report sits alongside the Signs of Safety work and supported the delivery of new approaches.
- 9.2 The Sub-structure had been included to allow those groups which were already in existence to have a reporting challenge and scrutiny arrangement, which would facilitate greater accountability for outcomes.
- 9.3 Norfolk County Council had taken a lead role in producing an information sharing protocol across the different agencies. Policy & Resources Committee had endorsed the Information Sharing Protocol at its meeting in March 2015 and the Interim Executive Director was working with Partners and agencies on the most appropriate way of sharing information.
- 9.4 In response to a challenge regarding community engagement, it was noted that the sub-group looking at participation and engagement would be chaired by Momentum and involved a range of partners, including considerable involvement from the community and volunteer sectors.
- 9.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** :

- To Support the partnership developments outlined in the report and in particular endorsed the sub-group structure outlined at Appendix 1 of the report.
- Members requested an update on the work across the partnership at its next meeting on 7 July 2015.

## 10 Schools Capital Programme 2015-18

- 10.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services proposing the annual revision of the schools capital programme, originally approved by Cabinet in April 2014. The report detailed the new funding allocations received from the Education Funding Agency. The report was based upon the advice and recommendations of Capital Priorities Group at their meetings in January and March 2015.
- 10.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
- The Committee was reassured that the recommendations made by the Capital Priorities Group followed robust discussions and procedures to assess the bids made by schools to ensure that the process was transparently, fairly and consistently applied across all schools.
  - The prediction that 20 additional schools would be required by 2021 was as a result of studies around the predicted significant areas of housing growth, although this was dependant on the housing market. Any new build schools were likely to be occupied by academies with the local authority holding the freehold.
  - Following a comment that some school Governors felt that the process lacked transparency and consultation, the Assistant Director for Education agreed to consider this further in the light of further discussion outside the meeting and respond directly.
  - Some work would be carried out on the outcomes of children working in mobile classrooms compared with those children learning in classrooms and feed results back to Committee members. It was accepted that modular accommodation differed but the preferred option would always be to allocate funding into permanent accommodation for children in schools and a lot of work was carried out to ensure the right accommodation was provided.
  - The funding had been granted to develop schools regardless of whether they were local authority schools or academies. Free schools were funded in a different way.
- 10.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to
- Approve the proposed revision of the 2014-17 schools capital programme, as set out in Annex A of the report, to become the working 2015-18 programme.
  - Approve the overall direction of travel for capital prioritisation in forward years (as set out in section 3 of the report).

**11 Consultation on a major change to School Organisation requiring the publication of a Statutory Notice.**

- 11.1 The Committee received the report by the Assistant Director Education informing Members about the reasons behind, and the current progress of a statutory consultation on a proposal by Norfolk County Council, in agreement with the Diocese of Ely and the governors, to close William Marshall Voluntary Controlled Primary School in Welney.
- 11.2 The Committee **agreed** that the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services should remain in the meeting and listen to the discussion as this would assist her in making a decision on whether or not she should agree to publish a statutory public notice on the proposals to close William Marshall Voluntary Controlled Primary School in Welney.
- 11.3 Mr H Humphrey, County Councillor for Marshland South, spoke as Local Member about the possible closure, during which the following points were noted:
- The Parish Council did not want the school to close.
  - It was pleasing to note that costs did not appear to be the main issue and that this fact needed to be stressed at the public meeting.
  - The difficult job the Governors had in making the school sustainable was recognised, particularly the sharing of a headteacher with Upwell Community Primary School.
  - Reassurance was sought that all other possible options had been considered, before consideration had been given to closing the school.
  - When considering the catchment area for Welney, could thought be given to the fact that the Wash Road, Welney regularly flooded during winter months which led to a 25 mile detour around the flooded road. It was suggested that the catchment area could be extended to include Ten Mile Bank.
  - Reassurance was sought that the capital sum would be adequate.
  - The problems faced by small schools was recognised, even though most small schools did some excellent work and achieved good results.
- 11.4 The Assistant Director for Education presented the report, during which the following points were noted:
- As part of the smaller school strategy, small schools required organisational partnerships to allow them to remain viable. Unfortunately William Marshall Governors had recognised that keeping this school open was no longer a viable option.
  - An initial consultation was due to close on 25 May and once the consultation had finished, a report would be provided for the Interim Director of Children's



Services to enable her to decide if the public notice would be issued to hold a public consultation and then ultimately to close the school.

- 11.5 Members reiterated that consideration should be given to how difficult it was to cross the causeway during winter months and the fact that this could account for the numbers of children in the catchment area already attending other schools in the area.
- 11.6 Members asked that, should the decision to close William Marshall School be made, consideration should be given to making the catchment school one which did not include crossing the causeway to access a school.
- 11.7 Reassurance was given that pupils moving from William Marshall VC Primary School would be offered free transport to the new school.
- 11.8 Any assistance required to provide new uniforms to pupils attending the new school would be considered and given where this was appropriate.
- 11.9 The Governors at Upwell had decided to cease their federation with William Marshall School as they considered the Headteacher no longer had the capacity to cover both schools.
- 11.10 The Committee **RESOLVED** to
- Note the contents of the report.
  - Ask that the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services, after listening to the debate, using delegated powers, considers publishing a formal notice to propose the closure of William Marshall Voluntary Controlled Primary School in Welney.

The meeting adjourned at 1pm and reconvened at 1.30pm.

- 12 The Committee **agreed** to consider agenda item 15 (Annual Report of the Independent Chair of Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board) as its next item of business, followed by agenda item 13 (Healthy Child Programme).

### 13 **Norfolk Safeguarding Children's Board (NSCB) Update**

- 13.1 The Committee received the annual report and verbal update from David Ashcroft, Chair of the NSCB, during which the following points were noted:
- The report was an overview of the work that had been undertaken from 1 April to 31 March 2014, and was a backwards look at the Children's safeguarding system. The issues regarding data and reliability created some difficulty at that time making the data insufficient to consider trends and make comparisons. Members were reassured that the next report would include information about partnership arrangements and how data had been improved. The next report would also recognise the ability to prioritise issues as they arose.

- The Chair of NSCB would circulate a copy of the report which had been submitted to the Department for Education to Members of the Committee.
- At the point relating to this report, there were some data issues regarding recording for CSE, these had since been addressed.

13.2 The Committee **noted** the report and that it had also been reported to the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board, Norfolk County Council's Managing Director, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk and to partner agencies.

#### **14 Healthy Child Programme**

14.1 The Committee received a verbal update from the Interim Director of Public Health, during which the following points were noted:

14.2 When the Public Health function became the responsibility of Norfolk County Council, the Government had not transferred school nursing and family health nursing. This came into effect from 2015.

The Health Visiting workforce was due to transfer to Norfolk County Council in October 2015 which had provided an opportunity to commission an integrated 0-19 service with NHS England.

14.3 In May 2014 Cabinet had approved the transfer of £2million from adult public health services to the Healthy Child Programme on the basis that improved children's public health services would contribute to giving every child the best start in life and support educational attainment.

14.4 After undertaking needs assessments, engaging stakeholders and consulting with children and young people, a service specification had been developed by Public Health staff in conjunction with NHS England and Children's Services.

14.5 The specification was outcomes focussed and offered incentives for improving school readiness, co-production with service users and reducing inequalities.

14.6 Following dialogue with all relevant parties, a preferred provider had been identified and a verbal report would be presented to the Communities Committee meeting on 13 May, asking the Committee to agree to award the contract.

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

- The Interim Director of Public Health confirmed that if Communities Committee agreed the proposal, and the contract was awarded, the contract should be ready for implementation by 1 October 2015.
- The Committee requested an update at its July meeting on who had been awarded the contract, together with any implications it may have on the committee.

- Discussions had taken place to ensure there was a good transitional plan in place which should be in situ by the next committee meeting.

14.8 The Committee **noted** the verbal update.

## **15 Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2015-17**

15.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services setting out the council's response to the statutory duty to ensure there were sufficient places for children who came into the care system. The strategy document set out how it was intended to meet the Sufficiency Duty as laid down in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989.

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

- The reference to the Isle of Wight would be removed from future reports as this was not a suitable comparator.
- The target of reducing the number of children and young people in residential care to less than 7% of the total population was the national average and Norfolk County Council was looking to be better than the average figure which was why the figure shown was less than 7%.
- Members were reassured that Children's Services was being proactive in holding open dialogue with foster agencies about the services they provided.

15.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to endorse the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy as part of the policy framework for Children in Care in Norfolk and recognised the links to the Early Help Strategy.

## **16 Update to Committee on Norfolk Fostering**

16.1 The Committee received a report by the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services updating the Committee on the current position regarding fostering. As part of the introduction of a Signs of Safety methodology, a number of procedures and policies in the Directorate were being revised. Given the contentious nature of fostering, these were being brought to committee to ensure appropriate oversight. The approach was aimed at improving practice and working towards preventing disruptions in foster care. The approach to revising the procedures was wholly in line with a sequenced piece of work across the Directorate to bring the procedures in line with signs of safety approaches.

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

- Foster carers were usually self-employed and therefore did not have employee rights under case law. They received tax concessions for being foster carers.
- In-house foster carers received paid sick leave of two weeks full pay and 2 weeks half pay.

- Norfolk County Council worked to ensure appropriate support for foster carers. This gave them access to free legal advice if there were allegations made against them, plus independent advocacy and support.
- Foster agencies set their own terms and conditions for their foster carers. Work was being done to establish a regular forum with foster agencies to discuss how they managed their foster carers.
- Private foster caring was outside the scope of the report; it was a private contract between a parent and an agency.
- The Independent Review had commenced and so far had flagged up a small number of cases. The referral route would remain open until the end of May 2015 and, to date, 23 individuals had made representation, not all of which would fit into the criteria of the review. At present, there appeared to be 12 or 13 foster carers who fitted the terms of reference of the independent review. The Director pointed out this was being dealt with by Mr Parker and that this update to the public part of the committee was intended to fulfil the initial update indicated in the Terms of Reference of that review.
- The Review Team was in place with cross-agency engagement and independent social work capacity being arranged. Foster carers were also represented.

16.3 The Committee **noted** the report and update.

## 17 **Accommodation Strategy**

17.1 The Committee received the report from the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services setting out a proposal to support the strategic aims of the Children's Services improvement programme, deliver financial savings through reducing demand by meeting need better and align with corporate developments to deliver services more locally. Children's Services would ensure their accommodation strategy was at least cost-neutral in impact on revenue budgets within the current financial year by balancing additional accommodation costs with reduced costs of delivering services.

17.2 The committee **RESOLVED** to

- Endorse the principles of the approach set out as being essential to the implementation of the Children's Services improvement programme and the Getting in Shape restructure and agreed the Director of Children's Services proceed to implement the proposals in Section 1 of the report.
- Recommend that Policy & Resources note this development of the Council's strategy for management of its property assets as complementing previous decisions to concentrate office services in three locations (Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth) by providing suitable accommodation for the delivery of services direct to children and families on a locality footprint.

## **18 Exclusion of the Public**

- 18.1 The Committee considered excluding the public whilst agenda item 18 was discussed and was presented with the following public interest test, as required by the 2006 Access to Information Regulations for consideration by the Committee:

“Exclusion of the press and public in relation to agenda item 19 (Norfolk Children’s Centre Vision and Delivery Options from 1 April 2016) is sought under paragraph 3 of part 1 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as it contained commercially sensitive information”.

- 18.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** that the public be excluded whilst the report was considered.

## **19 Final Report by Members of the Children’s Centres Task and Finish Group (re-convened).**

- 19.1 The Committee received the report by the Chairman of the Children’s Centres Task and Finish Group presenting it with options for the re-procurement of the service provided by Children’s Centres at the end of the four year contract.
- 19.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to support the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group as set out in the report. Officers were delegated to progress options 1a or 2 and if these proved to be unsuccessful, bring a further report back to the Committee before option 4 was implemented.
- 20 The Committee placed on record its thanks to Michael Rosen and Andrew Haley for their work as Interim Directors over the last 18 months. Michael and Andrew would be leaving Norfolk County Council at the end of June and the Committee wished them well for the future.

The Committee also thanked Helen Wetherall for her service as an Interim Director and noted that Helen would remain at Norfolk County Council as Interim Director for the Adult Education Service.

The meeting closed at 3.15pm

**Chairman**



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