

## **Children's Services Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 16 January 2018  
10am, Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

### **Present:**

Mr S Dark – Acting Chairman

Mr D Collis	Mr M Smith-Clare
Ms E Corlett	Mr B Stone
Mr J Fisher	Ms S Squire
Mr R Hanton – Acting Vice-Chairman	Mrs A Thomas
Mr E Maxfield	Mr V Thomson
Mr R Price	Mrs S Young

### **Church Representatives:**

Mr P Dunning

### **1. Apologies and substitutions**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mrs P Carpenter (Mrs A Thomas substituted), Mr G Middleton (Mrs S Young substituted) and Mrs H Bates.

### **2. Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the Children's Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 14 November 2017 were agreed as an accurate record by the Committee and signed by the Chairman after clarification was given for point 7.4.

### **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.

Ms S Squire declared an other interest as she had two son's both of whom have an EHCP and are in a Norfolk school and was a Governor at The Bridges Federation. (Magdalen, St Germans & Wimbotsham Primary schools).

#### **4. Items of Urgent Business**

4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

#### **5. Public Question Time**

5.1 There were two public questions submitted which are attached at appendix 1.

#### **6. Local Member Issues/Member Questions**

6.1 There had been no local member questions submitted.

#### **7. Performance Monitoring 2017-18**

7.1 The Committee received the annexed report (7) by the Executive Director of Children's Services which focused primarily on data as at end of November 2017 and in addition to vital signs performance the report contained key information via the MI report.

7.2 The Committee expressed some concern that there were figures that were on a downward path trend and was this a whole system problem that needed to be addressed. All parties needed to play their part to hit targets especially about health assessments. There were challenges in teams relating to caseloads, particularly Norwich and Great Yarmouth where the issues were known and plans were in place. Management were routinely looking at the social worker case load where it exceeded 40, but it was stressed that these were in assessment teams, and were quick turnaround cases. This was not the norm and was not across every team.

7.3 A review of the multi-agenda Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was taking place. Officers were trying to understanding the work that was being undertaken by Mash to ensure that it was appropriate and the process was aligned correctly. The review was being led by operational and senior strategic role and had been driven by the Ofsted inspection and the department's own observations. The review was taking place by looking at a large number of contacts and best practice undertaken in other councils. Officers explained that all of the information received is recorded which can be time consuming but also incredibly useful, and it was a matter of getting the balance right. The Committee asked to see an update report of this review in a couple of months.

7.4 It was suggested by the Committee that external factors such as universal credits could be bearing on the number of social worker caseloads. It was clarified that referrals were constantly being referred to identify themes such as this.

7.5 Officers explained that the older a child is when they are excluded the harder is it for them to achieve well as it was difficult to find an establishment in order for them to be successful. Those youngsters were tracked and there were strategies in place to

prevent NEET. At the next committee meeting, there would be a report about achievement in post 16 education, and it was agreed that updates on this topic would be included.

7.6 The Committee agreed that the data given to them regarding the performance were only snapshots and they were impressed at the degree of robustness and performance management especially across social worker teams.

7.7 The Committee **RESOLVED**;

1. To note the performance data, information and analysis presented in the vital sign report cards and determined whether the recommended actions identified are appropriate or whether another course of action is required.

## **8. Finance Monitoring Report Period 8 (November) 2017-18**

8.1 The Committee received the annexed report (8) by the Executive Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the performance and financial forecast outturn information for the 2017-18 financial year, as at end of November 2017 (period 8).

8.2 Members expected to see in house fostering costs increase as the residential costs decrease, however for children to achieve stability was key. Therefore this was not a quick saving as financial modelling was required to ensure sustainability. Changes have been introduced but it had not been possible to measure the impact.

8.3 The Committee appreciated that good performance costs money. It was suggested that Policy and Resources should be asked for more money for Children's Services in order to keep up the good performance and to prevent the significant overspend.

8.4 The Committee were reassured that all officers were clear that the point of the transformation plan was to match expenditure with demand. However this would not happen in year one as the pace of demand was outstripping what was available to spend.

8.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;

- Agree the forecast outturn position at period 8 for the 2017-18 Revenue Budget for both the Local Authority Budget and the schools budget.
- Agree to endorse and recommend to Policy and Resources Committee the use of £2.591m reserves, as set out in section 2.3, to reduce the level of the Children's Services forecast revenue overspend.
- Agree the forecast position as at period 8 for the 2017-18 Capital Programme

## **9. Strategic and Financial Planning 2018-19 to 2021-22 and Revenue Budget 2018-19**

9.1 The Committee received the annexed report (9) by the Executive Director of Children's Services which set out the proposals to inform the decisions on council tax and contribute towards the Council setting a legal budget for 2018-19. The report set out details of the County Council's strategy which will set out the future direction, vision and objectives for the Council across all its services. It also provided an overview of the financial issues for the Council.

- 9.2 The Committee recognised that nationally Children's Services had a £2billion public funding gap and were hoping for Fairer funding for Norfolk.
- 9.3 The Committee queried the potential impact of increasing the cost of early years training given the pressure that early years providers were under, Officers confirmed a competitive rate could still be offered which would help to make the service more commercialised and exist in a more traded manner.
- 9.4 With regards to the savings associated with demand management Officers were confident that the timescales could be achieved.
- 9.5 There was concern expressed that the saving associated with implementing the Demand Management and Prevention Strategy transformation programme was a considerably large amount and based on themes which were predominantly out of the control of Norfolk County Council. It was suggested that if changes and savings could be accelerated in other areas, this might mitigate the savings in this area if they were not to be realised. Officers explained that the initial focus of the savings would be on placements which would realise the larger savings. The savings were based on what could be done by NCC and the preventative work that could be carried out.
- 9.6 Some members of the Committee were concerned that the savings proposal regarding the Children's Centre's services was front loaded. However the rationale was understood and the need for transparency. It was explained that the current contract would continue for another year with a £3m saving from a re-modelled service from 2019-2020. There would be more consultation to redesign the service and conversations had been started early enough so that the service could fit the need. The important role of health visitors and other professionals providing Children's Centres services was recognised and would continue.
- 9.7 Officers reassured the Committee that buildings which would jeopardise families in any way such as safety, confidentiality or accessibility would not be considered for any Children's Centre services.
- 9.8 Some services offered by Children's Centres could also be offered by other organisations and therefore it was important to ensure that services were not being duplicated. Services by Children's Centre would still be available informed by business intelligence and evidence. There had to be progress with meeting demands and the same services cannot be offered in the same way.
- 9.9 Communities change but it was necessary to retain services that were part of a communication channel between NCC and communities and to maintain a rapport with those that used and relied upon those services.
- 9.10 Some Members expressed grave concern over the lack of details in the savings proposal for Children's Centres. It was too difficult to agree to something without knowing to what extent the Children's Centre would be affected. Halving the budget would dramatically alter the services provided and impact users. The hardship fund was used to enable users to access the services when they were isolated in rural areas, and this could be a lifeline for some users. It was confirmed by Officers that the hardship fund was ringfenced and would continue for the next financial year. Generally, there had been underspend of the fund, and therefore it was unconfirmed if it would continue after that.

- 9.11 In response to some Members frustration, Officers acknowledge the importance of a children's centre services offer to help isolation and loneliness and, although the model would look different, it would continue to provide this support.
- 9.12 The re-model of Children's services would be brought back to Committee when the detail had been considered. It would be work which would be carried out imminently with the intention of finalising at the end of Autumn. The Committee were reassured that any evidence of detrimental impact on any groups of the community would be brought to the Committee's attention.
- 9.13 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- a) Note the new corporate priorities – Norfolk Futures – to focus on demand management, prevention and early help, and a locality focus to service provision as set out in section 2 of this report.
  - b) Agree the service-specific budgeting issues for 2018-19 as set out in section 5.
  - c) Note the Committee's specific budget proposals for 2018-19 to 2021-22 including the findings of public consultation in respect of the budget proposals as set out in Appendix 2.
  - d) Note the findings of equality and rural impact assessments, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report, and in doing so, note the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to;
    - a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
    - b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
    - c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and person who do not share it.
  - e) Note and agree any mitigating actions proposed in the equality and rural impact assessments;
  - f) Note the recommendations of the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services, and;
    - a) Recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that the Council's budget includes an inflationary increase of 2.99% in council tax in 2018-19, within the council tax referendum limit of 3.0% for 2018-19;
    - b) Note that the Council's budget planning includes an increase in council tax of 3.0% for the Adult Social Care precept in 2018-19, meaning that no increase in the Adult Social Care precept would be levied in 2018-20.
  - g) Agree and recommend to Policy and Resources Committee the draft Committee Revenue Budget as set out in Appendix 4 of the report:
    - a. including all of the savings for 2018-19 to 2021-22 as set out for consideration by Policy and Resources Committee on 29 January 2018, to enable Policy and Resources Committee to recommend a sound, whole-Council budget to Full Council on 12 February 2018.
    - h) Agree and recommend the Capital Programmes and schemes relevant to this Committee as set out in Appendix 5 to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration on 29 January 2018, to enable Policy and Resources Committee to recommend a Capital Programme to Full Council on 12 February 2018.

## 10. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

- 10.1 The Committee received the annexed report (10) by the Executive Director of Children's Services which presented the changes to the distribution for the Dedicated Schools Grant from April 2018 in line with the Department of Education's Fairer School Funding arrangements.
- 10.2 It was explained that the high needs block was continually under pressure. The demand for complex and specialist needs was proportionally greater than what it had been in previous years.
- 10.3 Some Members were concerned at the impact of this proposal of SEND children in mainstream schools. The Cluster model didn't always work for all schools but schools in general run a very modest budget and rely on the cluster SEND model to gain the extra funding that they needed. It was suggested that this proposal could mean an increase in exclusions as behaviour would be harder to manage.
- 10.4 Cllr Squire proposed to remove recommendation 2 from the list of recommendations pending further consultations.  
With 2 votes for, and 7 against, the proposal was LOST.
- 10.5 The budget currently received by NCC had remained static, however the requirement, demand and legislation had increased.
- 10.6 Education health and care plans were at record level even though there were not needed once the child had been funded. Schools had been given delegated money plus given access to a top up cluster fund and for some clusters this had worked well and they had used the system correctly. Schools who did this would not be penalised in the new system.
- 10.7 The budget for Norfolk's SEND children was £78 million and it was continually being overspent. There was a balance between meeting the needs of the children and stewarding public funds. NCC had a duty to hold schools to account for the funding whilst trying to mitigate risks for children.
- 10.8 Some Members were concerned that small schools did not have the capacity or experience to apply for the funding. Officers confirmed that support would be available for the process and the priority was getting the right money to the right children.
- 10.9 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Agree the Dedicated Schools Grant funding and the changes to the schools funding formula.
- 11. The Supply of School and Childcare Places in Norfolk**
- 11.1 The Committee received the annexed report (11) by the Executive Director of Children's Services which is an annual report combined with the statutory report to Members on the published Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.
- 11.2 There was ongoing discussions regarding the place needs throughout the County. No planning applications had been made for speculative free schools. The applications known about were for areas that are in need of school places.
- 11.3 It was anticipated that parents would want to take advantage of the free 30 hours childcare provision where they need it rather than where it was available.

Encouragement was being given to childcare providers to open earlier or stay open later.

11.4 The Committee **RESOLVED**;

- To adopt the Schools' Local Growth and Investment Plan and the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

**12. Determination of 2019/20 Admission Arrangements**

12.1 The Committee received the annexed report (12) by the Executive Director of Children's Services which summarised the statutory consultation outcomes and proposed no changes to Norfolk's admissions co-ordination scheme and timetable for the academic year 2019/20.

12.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;

Local Authority admissions co-ordination:

The co-ordination schemes and timetables including in-year co-ordination are approved for 2019/20.

Admission arrangements for Community and VC schools:

- That no changes are made to the current (2018/19) policies for 2019/20.

**13. Elective Home Education – the Norfolk Picture**

13.1 The Committee received the annexed report (13) by the Executive Director of Children's Services which provided contextual information in relation to Elective Home Education (EHE). The report enabled members to be aware of the LA's duties for children and young people who are home educated, current performance in accordance with these duties and areas for improvement are identified and acted upon.

13.2. The Committee were informed that there was no statutory duty to record which children were home educated. Indications showed that it was a growing culture. Officers explained that they wanted to identify those families who weren't confident in home educating but felt they had no choice. Children's Services were making contact with a home educating family as soon as it was alerted and were working with those families to ensure they weren't pressured into making that choice and what it would entail.

13.3 Although negative drivers may have initiated home education, families could find that it suited them and therefore be the right choice for them, or it could be suitable for a short term solution.

13.4 The Committee heard that it was important to be mindful of the large number of home educators who exist. The attendance service were using all their powers where they found unsuitable education but the numbers in and out of home education was quite fluid.

13.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;

- Note the current law and guidance on Elective Home Education (EHE) and proposed changed to guidance.
- Note the current performance given the increase in numbers and the complexity of cases locally and the prospect of additional and clearer statutory responsibilities in this area.
- Receive an update in March 2019.

#### **14. SEND Sufficiency Strategy**

- 14.1 The Committee received the annexed report (14) by the Executive Director of Children's Services which provided Members with information about the current government capital funding being made available for Norfolk and our ongoing engagement with partners and stakeholders to determine the priorities for the funding. In addition this report sets the context for future reporting, to both Children's Services Committee and Policy & Resources Committee, as part of a new over-arching SEND strategy and related 5 year invest to save plan.
- 14.2. Although there was an annual review of each child's Health and Care Plan, it was questioned if this was enough to ensure that children were in the right place and enough was being done to help them return to mainstream education if appropriate.
- 14.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Comment on draft recommendations for use of future government capital funding for SEND in Norfolk, prior to further co-production with partners and stakeholders in the spring term.
  - Agree to receive a further report to the March Children's Services Committee, to formally sign-off the plan prior to publication to secure £2.7million government capital SEND funding; in addition to receive subsequent reports in the summer, to take forward the longer term SEND Strategy and related sufficiency / invest to save plan.

#### **15. Children Injured in Road Traffic Accidents and Accidental Poisonings**

- 15.1 The Committee received the annexed report (15) by the Executive Director of Children's Services which explained that Norfolk had a higher rate of injury hospital admissions in children and young people. The main causes are falls, poisoning and road traffic collisions. Children's Services, together with public health could play a significant role in providing leadership, co-ordination and training.
- 15.2. The Committee were concerned about the number of poisonings to children as outlined in the report and as a result the Executive Director assured them that the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and the Safeguarding Board could review this aswell if the Committee wished.
- 15.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Note the report

#### **16. Committee Forward Plan and Update on Decisions Taken Under Delegated Authority**

- 16.1 The Committee received the annexed report (16) by the Executive Director of Children's Services which set out the forward plan to enabled members to shape future meeting agendas and items for consideration. The report was also used to update the Committee on relevant decisions taken under delegated powers by the Executive Director.
- 16.2. It was suggested by the Committee to bring a report on education health and care plans. Although this topic had been touched upon under other reports, it had not been considered in its own right.

- 16.3 It was recognised that the agenda had been quite lengthy and therefore the length of future January agendas would be lightened.
- 16.4 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Note the forward plan and add to the forward plan, if anything.

The meeting closed at 3.05pm.

**Chairman**



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