

Children's Services Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Wednesday 15 October 2014
2:00pm Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich

Present:

Mr J Joyce (Chair)

Mr R Bearman (Vice-Chair)

Mr B Borrett

Mrs J Chamberlin

Mr J Childs

Mr D Collis

Ms E Corlett

Mrs M Dewsbury

Mr C Foulger

Mr T Garrod

Ms D Gihawi

Mr P Gilmour

Mrs J Leggett

Mr J Perkins

Mr E Seward

Mr R Smith

Miss J Virgo

Non-Voting Co-opted Advisors:

Mr A Robinson

Ms V Aldous

Norfolk Governors Network

Primary Education

1 Apologies and substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mr M Kiddle-Morris (Mr B Borrett substituted); Mr D Crawford (Mr J Childs substituted); Mrs H Bates and Mr A Mash Church Representatives; Mrs K Byrne and Ms S Vertigan, Parent Governor Representatives.

2 Minutes from the meeting held on 16 September 2014

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendments:

- The recommendation in paragraph 7.3 to be amended to read "The Committee considered and discussed the contents of the report and recognised that the Director of Children's Services, using delegated powers, would proceed in accordance with the agreed process.
- Paragraph 15.2 to be amended as follows:
 - The Interim Director identified the lead senior officers for the Task and Finish Groups:
 - Children's Centres – Interim Assistant Director (Early Help).
 - Looked after Children – Assistant Director Social Care.

- Variations in Educational Attainment by District – Assistant Director, Education Strategy and Commissioning.

3 Matters arising

- 3.1 The Interim Director of Children's Services informed the Committee that she had received a copy of the report from Ofsted into the allegations of schools receiving advance notification of inspections and would circulate a copy of the report to the Committee. The Interim Director had also requested a copy of the action plan resulting from the report and would share this when it was received.
- 3.2 After consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair and after she had considered all the evidence, the Interim Director of Children's Services confirmed that that she had drafted a proposal to publish the statutory notice in respect of King George VI School.

The consultation period was for a period of four weeks from the date of publication which did not include half-term breaks.

- 3.3 Initial discussions about the setting up of the Member Safeguarding Forum had been held with Adult Social Services and it was hoped that the formal setting up of the Forum would take place soon.

4 Declarations of Interest

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5 Items of Urgent Business

- 5.1 The Chair informed the Committee that Norfolk was one of ten authorities which had been successful in a £4.7m bid for a programme of work called Signs of Safety. The successful bid, in conjunction with 9 other Authorities had international recognition and worked on an asset based approach with families. A project meeting was scheduled to take place on 17 October, after which the Interim Director would circulate further details to the committee.

The Committee was pleased to note that no additional money would need to be found as a result of the successful bid and that the project was expected to last for a period of 3 years.

6 Local Member Issues/Member Questions

- 6.1 No local member questions had been received.

7 Strategic and Financial Planning 2015-18

- 7.1 The Committee received a report by the Interim Director of Children's Services setting out the additional savings proposals for the services under the remit of the Committee to close the projected shortfall for 2015/16.

7.2 During the presentation of the report, it was noted that the information in the table on Page 20 of the agenda should read £k and not £m and that BWOW was an acronym for “better ways of working”.

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

- The cost of recruiting the new senior team was estimated to be £52k and work was underway to identify a funding source.
- The issue of savings built into next year’s budget was discussed and a number of concerns expressed, in particular post 16 transport and the impact on employment, skills and readiness for work in a rural county. The interim Director of Children’s Services advised of work completed to benchmark costs, work with colleges and the issues around subsidy. Members were concerned about the impact on families given the spread of post 16 education. A suggestion was made about widening the use of the “Kickstart” initiative which provided mopeds for young people to use at very little cost to get to work, training, or education. The Committee was reassured that this initiative was well used and accessible across Norfolk. The Committee was also advised that Children’s Services was working with the Passenger Transport Unit, ETD to explore all possible transport options.
- The Committee was informed that a large amount of the required savings would be realised through Digital Norfolk Ambition (DNA) including changed ways of working and that a report showing the latest position would be the subject of further discussion when the corporate plan was completed.
- Savings under the heading “using public transport within the LAC service” had been made in the current financial year. Those costs related to the transport costs in enabling parents to visit children who did not live at home. Historically there had been a reliance on taxis for this group of users, although this had now changed and parents used public transport which was a cheaper and more inclusive solution.
- Care would be taken to ensure social workers received regular support and did not become isolated from other team members in the department through hot desking and mobile technology policies.
- It was acknowledged that Children’s Services was currently overspending in three areas and appropriate management plans were in place to work towards containing those overspends. It was noted that the expectation was individual directorates would be responsible for funding any departmental overspends within their departments.
- Assurance was given about the use of the improvement reserve.
- An area of pressure was accommodation for Looked After Children. The Director offered assurance that appropriate plans were in place.
- It would be very difficult to quantify the specific costs of bereavement support as this was often part of an integrated commissioned package.

7.4 Mrs J Leggett proposed and Mr R Smith seconded, the following amendments to the recommendations in the report:

- Endorse the schedule of additional savings set out in Appendix A of the report as a basis for further research and discussion.
- ~~Recommend the individual savings as set out in the schedule, or identify replacement savings to equivalent value.~~
- Note the ~~any~~ risks set out in section 2.5 of the report relating to savings already consulted and agreed upon.
- Review arrangements to ensure tight control on revenue budgets and highlight any issues or risks to Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee discussed the amendment and with 10 votes for, 7 votes against and 0 abstentions the amendments were agreed.

7.5 With 10 votes in favour and 6 votes against, the Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- Endorse the schedule of additional savings set out in Appendix A of the report as a basis for further research and discussion.
- Note the risks set out in section 2.5 of the report relating to savings already consulted and agreed upon.
- Review arrangements to ensure tight control on revenue budgets and highlight any issues or risks to Policy and Resources Committee.

8 Internal and External Appointments

8.1 The Committee received a report by the Interim Director of Children's Services setting out the internal and external appointments relevant to Children's Services Committee.

8.2 The Committee agreed the composition and membership of the groups as set out in Appendix A to these minutes.

8.3 The Interim Director of Children's Services and the Head of Democratic Services would consider the forward plan and agree a schedule of reporting for future consideration by the Committee.

8.4 The Committee **RESOLVED** to:-

1. appoint the Members as set out in Appendix A of these minutes.
2. ask that those Members appointed to the Committees keep the Committee informed by way of regular additions to the budget monitoring report.

9 Children's Services Involvement Strategy

9.1 The Committee received a report by the Interim Director of Children's Services

setting out the Involvement Strategy and received a presentation by Barry Moore and Thomas Lee who were representing the young people who had assisted in the development of the strategy. A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix B to these minutes.

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

- The Interim Director of Children's Services informed the Committee that it was hoped to conduct an exercise on the budget at the Takeover Day on 21 November 2014 and the outcome would be reported to Committee.
- The Involvement Strategy clearly set out the expectations of young people and highlighted the commitment made by the Council to listen to young people.
- The Committee was reassured that in developing the strategy, care had been taken to ensure the views of all young people, across all age ranges had been represented. The work would now be rolled into expectations regarding professional standards in the workplace. The next step was to open up a dialogue with partners about the best way to roll out the strategy.
- Young people who were involved could claim and where it was not appropriate for them to receive a cash payment, a treat such as an outing, was offered. Members asked for a comparison to be made with other councils to see how young people were rewarded in other areas.
- A section on "how children and young people had been involved in the development of this report and its recommendations" would be included in future Children's Services Committee reports.

9.3 The Chair thanked Barry and Tom for attending the meeting.

9.4 The Committee **RESOLVED** to

- Agree to the contents of the strategy.
- Agree that elected members would become advocates for high quality involvement throughout the department and beyond.
- Agree that elected members would scrutinise the quality and relevance of involvement processes used within matters brought to Committee.
- To ask the Director to liaise with Democratic Services re including a section in reports on involvement of young people.

The meeting closed at 5.25 pm.

CHAIRMAN



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Children's Services Committees/Boards/Working Groups/Outside Bodies

(a) Children's Services Committees/Boards/Working Groups

1. Adoption Panels (1 member for each of the 2 Adoption Panels)

Alison Thomas
James Joyce

Plus 1 nominated substitute for each member

These are statutory bodies. Appointments to the Adoption Panels have by convention, not been made on a politically balanced basis, but instead on the basis of those best able to give the extensive time and commitment required.

2. Capital Priorities Group - 5

1 Labour (David Collis)
2 Con (Judy Leggett and Roger Smith)
1 UKIP (Paul Gilmour)
Chairman (James Joyce)

This Group:

- contributes to discussions about priorities for capital expenditure
- Develops consistent prioritisation criteria for capital expenditure
- Monitors capital building programmes
- Reviews the effectiveness of decisions it has taken and adapts criteria accordingly

It was agreed that members of this Group should be members of Children's Services Committee and decisions of the Group are to be brought to this Committee for noting

3. Local Authority Governor Appointments Group – 6

2 Labour - Julie Brociek-Coulton, Mick Castle
2 Conservative - Judy Leggett, Roger Smith
1 UKIP - Paul Gilmour
Vice Chairman (Richard Bearman)

This Group makes recommendations to the Director of Children's Services on:

1. Filling of vacancies for LEA School Governors on the basis of nominations recommended by the appropriate nominating Party Spokesmen
2. Dismissal of LEA School Governors
3. Making appointments to educational trusts

4. Norfolk Foster Panels – 1 for each Panel

Central Norfolk – Judy Leggett
West – James Joyce
East – Tom Garrod
Plus 1 nominated substitute for each member

These are statutory bodies. Appointments to the Foster Panels have by convention, not been made on a politically balanced basis, but instead on the basis of those best able to give the extensive time and commitment required.

5. School Admissions Forum – 6

2 Labour (Mick Castle and Julie Brociek-Coulton)
3 Cons (Judy Leggett, Roger Smith, Judith Virgo)
1 UKIP (Denis Crawford)

The admissions forum was set up to review admission arrangements and originally had statutory powers to challenge admission authorities' practices and to report annually to the Schools Adjudicator. The statutory duty to have an admissions forum ceased in February 2012 but Norfolk's forum agreed not to disband but only to meet if a significant admissions issue emerged. To date no meeting has been convened and we propose to consult admission authorities on the continued need for a forum in the next admissions consultation – planned for Winter 2014. The outcome of the consultation will be considered by this Committee in March 2015 as part of its determination of future admission arrangements.

6. Teachers Joint Consultative Committee – 11

2 Labour (Mike Sands and I TBA)
5 Cons (Roger Smith, Colin Foulger, Judy Leggett, Tony Adams, Tom Garrod)
1 Green (Richard Bearman)
1 LD (Eric Seward)
2 UKIP (Denis Crawford and Paul Gilmour)

This is a forum for discussion between teacher unions and the County Council on employment related matters.

It was agreed to ask the Director of Children's Services to review the operation and membership of this body.

7. Youth Advisory Boards

Breckland – Terry Jermy
Broadland – Judy Leggett
Great Yarmouth – Jonathan Childs
King's Lynn and West Norfolk – Richard Bird
North Norfolk – Brian Hannah
Norwich – Richard Bearman
South Norfolk – Margaret Somerville

8. Virtual School Governing Body (4)

Vice Chairman of the Committee - Richard Bearman

Chairman of the Committee - James Joyce

1 Conservative - Judy Leggett

1 Labour - Mike Sands

9. Small Schools Steering Group (2)

This Group was reconvened to evaluate the impact of the autumn term 2013 review of small schools and make recommendations for further activity.

Deputy Lead Member for Children's Services (Richard Bearman)

1 Conservative (Judy Leggett)

10. Corporate Parenting Executive Group (5)

This Group ensures that Norfolk's promise to young people leaving care is implemented, by holding to account people who are responsible for its delivery. It replaced the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group.

Lead Member for Children's Services (Co-chair)

1 Labour - Deborah Gihawi,

Deputy Lead Member for Children's Services – Richard Bearman,

1 Conservative - Judy Leggett

1 UKIP – Paul Gilmour

11. Joint Road Casualty Reduction Partnership Board (4)

A partnership that brings together appropriate public, private and voluntary sector commissioner and provider organisations in Norfolk to reduce the number and severity of road traffic casualties on roads in Norfolk, and to increase public confidence that all forms of journeys on roads in the county will be safe.

The Partnership Board requires a member from the following Committees

Environment, Development and Transport,

Communities

Health and Well-Being Board

Children's Services

Children's Services – Jenny Chamberlin

(b) Outside Bodies

1. Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (4)

Bert Bremner

Deborah Gihawi

Alexandra Kemp
Margaret Somerville

The organisation aims to ensure that the statutory provision of RE and collective worship is of a consistently high standard. SACRE has requested the Council to continue to make appointments.

It was agreed to request a report to this Committee from SACRE on its activities

2. Great Yarmouth College Corporation - (1)

The Corporation advises it does not have a position reserved for the County Council. Members may apply for a Governor role, but there is no provision for the Council to make an appointment.

3. Earthsea & Merrywood Houses (1)

The organisation (a residential therapeutic community for children and young people) advises its new governance does not require a Council representative

4. Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust Shadow Council of Governors
(2)

(1 representing Adults) Mike Sands
(1 representing Children) Emma Corlett

Norfolk Community Health & Care NHS Trust is responsible for community health provision across all of Norfolk except for Great Yarmouth and Waveney. This includes community hospitals and a full range of non-acute services including community nursing, health visiting, and school nursing services. The Trust currently shares one senior manager post with Adult Social Care and is in the process of agreeing a joint senior management team with the Council.

Council appointees as a Governor of an NHS Trust should not also be members of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee because of the potential / perceived conflict of interest.

Children's Services Involvement Strategy

Or as we like to call it a dummies guide to how to ask people what they need and want from their services.

So what is actually in the strategy

Explanation of what Children's services is responsible for.

Our priorities and principles for involvement

What we want to achieve in the future and how we intend to achieve it.

So why do we need a strategy

If you don't ask what people want how can you make the right decisions about the services you provide.

If you don't have a plan or strategy how can you make sure that everyone does it in the right way, at the right time and to a high standard

So what are the benefits of involvement

Children, young people and families.

Communities

Workers and managers at the Council

The Council and County Councillors

How did we write the strategy

We involved children, young people and families in deciding what should be in the strategy.

Young people County Council staff and elected councillors formed a working group to write the strategy.

Next steps

We need to measure how good we are at involving people now so we can see how we improve.

We need to start doing this and make sure everyone signs up and takes it seriously

We need to make sure children, young people families and communities understand they have a right to be involved and know what those opportunities are

We need to make sure all staff know they have to involve children, young people and families, and are trained and have the skills to do this properly.

Extra effort for hard to reach groups

Some groups that rarely get involved include

- People with English as a second language
- People from poorer families
- People with mental health problems
- People who have trouble reading and writing
- People who live miles from anywhere
- People who have not felt listened to in the past.

Thank you

Thank you very much for listening

Do you have any questions for us?

Barriers to involving people

They tell us things we don't want to know

It makes everything take more time

It does add a small cost to the piece of work

So what do we need from you

That Children's Services committee agrees to what we have written in the strategy

That elected members agree to become advocates and champions for high quality involvement throughout the department and the whole Council where a decision will affect children and young people.

That elected members make sure involvement has been done properly in all items brought to committee.