



Children's Services Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 13 November 2018
10am, Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich

Present:

Mr S Dark – Chairman

Mr D Collis
Ms E Corlett
Mr J Fisher
Mr R Hanton
Mr H Humphrey
Mr E Maxfield

Mr J Mooney
Ms J Oliver – Vice-Chairman
Mr M Smith-Clare
Mrs S Squire
Mr V Thomson
Mrs S Young

Church Representatives:

Mr P Dunning

Mrs Helen Bates

Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman received a petition from Cllr Emma Corlett which the Labour group had collected in relation to the consultation on the changes proposed to Norfolk's Children's Centres. The consultation had ended on 12th November 2018.

1. Apologies and substitutions

1.1 Apologies were received from Mr Barry Stone, substituted by Mrs Sheila Young.

2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2018

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2018 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments;

2.1a Mr E Maxfields declaration of interest should read 'declared an 'other' interest as he was employed by a Charity who are commissioned by Norfolk County Council and was a Governor at two schools', and not

2.1b Point 8.6 in the minutes would be re-written as follows;
Members asked officers whether they were confident that changes to the children's centre service made this year ahead of the consultation launch, namely; a reduction in the age range from 8 to 5, the cessation of outreach in some locations and the introduction of charging for some sessions, are changes that could or should be

made without consultation. Officers responded that there had been consultation with providers who had agreed with the changes.

3. Declarations of Interest

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 E Maxfield declared an 'other' interest as he was employed by a Charity who are commissioned by Norfolk County Council and was a Governor at two schools.

Mrs S Squire declared an 'other' interest as her sons had Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) administered by Norfolk County Council.

Mr H Humphrey declared an 'other' interest as he was a Governor at Emneth School.

Mr V Thomson declared an 'other' interest as his son had an EHCP plan.

Ms E Corlett declared an 'other' interest that she was on the Bignold Oversight Team and was on the Fostering Panel for NCC.

4. Items of Urgent Business

- 4.1 The Chairman reported that there had been an item of urgent business submitted by Mr Mike Smith-Clare which had not met the urgent business criteria.

5. Public Question Time

- 5.1 There were four public questions submitted, which are attached at appendix 1.
- 5.2 Karen Davis asked a supplementary question regarding how the needs for children with social and emotional difficulties will be met over the next 12 months if they did not want to go to a Short Stay School. Officers explained that they worked closely with leaders of the Short Stay Schools to ensure a managed move happened so there was no break in transition. It was up to NCC to ensure that when a place was commissioned it provided what it was supposed to provide. There are also family support plans in place which give a wider range of support.

6. Local Member Issues/Member Questions

- 6.1 There were three local member questions submitted, which are attached at appendix 1.
- 6.2 Cllr Alexandra Kemp asked a supplementary question;
“The cost of Child Poverty in Norfolk is £330 million a year, according to the Child Poverty Action Group, but the reality is, that when children need Early Help, the threshold is already set so high, that professionals say they could have so done much more if they had been allowed to help earlier.
Family Support for children to the age of 8, has just been restricted to children up to the age of 5, so schools cannot now access help for older siblings and this could lead to more exclusions and more children in care.

Children’s Centres are a universal service through which parents access the new Perinatal Service.

There is a high risk of suicide for perinatal mothers; a parent from any background can become unwell very quickly; so professional opinion is that local connections like the Children’s Centre are important, with Adult Mental Health services already overstretched and long gaps between Health Visitor’s home visits - at birth, 6 weeks, 3 months, 1 year, 2 years.

Parents can be afraid to ask for help in formal settings, as they are afraid their children may be taken away. But they trust Children’s Centres, visible as they are in the community. It would be so wrong to take the service out of buildings or close all the Children’s Centres in King’s Lynn, like South Lynn, which this Council knows are in the most deprived areas in England.

As this is above party politics, I am asking every single member of the Children’s Committee to vote to keep the free face-to-face advice service and free support groups in all Children’s Centres open to every parent, as existing Early Help services across the board have been reduced so much that Norfolk County Council should not, must not and cannot reduce them any more”.

- 6.3 Cllr Corlett had received a response to the question but expressed the point that some parents were under the impression that they didn’t have to fill in their responses to the consultation online as they had attended a feedback session with Officers. They would have liked to have seen the notes from these sessions circulated.

7. Performance Monitoring Report

- 7.1 The Committee received the annexed report (7) which Executive Director of Children’s Services which focused primarily on the data as at end of September 2018.
- 7.2 The Committee expressed concern that there had been a drop in the percentage of care leavers who were in employment / education or training. In September 2017, there was 62% of care leavers whereas in the current period it had reduced to 56%. Officers explained that some youngsters would make the decision that they did not want to progress into further education. There were advisers available to help them make the right decision for them. The figures were not always representative of the choices made as it was a constant challenge to record every decision made. The

Committee felt that this needed to be a priority as over the past year there had been a constant decrease of numbers, and the Council needed to be in a place where could support the youngsters before they got into situations which could be damaging long term. Officers agreed there would be a focus on this.

- 7.3 Concern was raised that the department had been addressing the Ofsted concerns and other areas had suffered as a result, hence the latest data of the completion timescales of the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and as a result had to now focus on those with the greatest level of need with the greatest level of cost to the department. The Executive Director gave assurance to the Committee that this was not the case. Efforts were being made to increase resources in order to complete the EHCP timely and the performance was constantly being monitored. As part of the transformation plan, it would shift to a preventative style of working which would in turn improve performance in this area.
- 7.4 Officers confirmed that metrics were green as they were making good progress. There was a discussion that some targets could be more challenging and this would be reviewed.
- 7.5 The Committee heard that the data that had been circulated with regards to a tribunal for an EHCP related to the timeliness of the EHCP or special school places, not necessarily the outcome of the EHCP. Schools provide the correct intervention for those pupils even before a EHCP is awarded. In the report scheduled for the January meeting, more detail would be given.
- 7.6 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
Review and comment on the performance data, information and analysis presented in the vital sign report cards and concluded that the recommended actions were appropriate.

8. Budget Monitoring Report

- 8.1 The Committee received the annexed report (8) which set out the Period 6 (September) financial forecast for Children's Services, and the programme of transformation and improvement that is continuing. The report explained the financial resources to deliver the Safer Children and Resilient Families Strategy of Norfolk Futures and the forecast revenue expenditure for 2018/19.
- 8.2 The Committee heard that there were approximately 150 children who were in mainstream schools who needed a place at a Short Stay School, however this number fluctuated. They were all known to the Local Authority and in receipt of additional funding to ensure needs were being met.
- 8.3 Work was being carried out with legal services to procure legal advice and were looking at all possible options.
- 8.4 With the SEN transport plan, it was hoped that no child would travel more than 59 minutes for a special school place. Currently, too many children travelled too far to go to school.

- 8.5 With regards to the Looked After Children overspend, Officers confirmed that the benefits realisation of the transformation plan would be from early 2019 and mostly in the 19/20 financial year. This was the way it had been planned, and that knee jerk reactions would undermine the medium term strategy that was in place, and that any LAC reduction would be safe and sustainable.
- 8.6 A Member made the point that they considered that information regarding the current level of outreach and the associated costs in Children's Centres should have been part of the report to give a baseline, and that information should have been available before the recent Children's Centres consultation. Officers explained the information would be given as part of the report being brought to the Committee in January.
- 8.7 **The Committee NOTED;**
(i) the forecast overspend of £7.349m for General Fund Children's Services
(ii) the forecast use of Children's Services General Fund reserves and provisions
(iii) £6.508m of the £6.534m Dedicated Schools Grant Children's Services will need to be offset by
 a. £4.314m against Locally Managed Schools' balances and recovered in future years
 b. £2.220m against the General Fund
(iv) the amendments to and reprogramming of the Children's Services Capital Programme

The Committee had a break between 12.20pm and 12.35pm.

9. Schools' Capital Programme 2017-2020

- 9.1 The Committee received the annexed report (9) which builds on the May 2018 report, identifying emerging capital priorities for 2019 onwards.
- 9.2 The Committee noted that it was pleasing to see delivery on the site of the former Alderman Swindell school site but were interested to know more details. Officers explained that they were in the middle of the feasibility study. There were potentially two elements; one which related to an ambition similar to a school in Norwich and one which related to social care. More information would be given to Committee as it progressed.
- 9.3 The Committee questioned if using modular classrooms created a longer term more expensive problem than building a permanent structure. Officers explained that modular classrooms were used for reacting to the growth of the school and were a quick response. There were various types of mobile or modular classrooms which were very different to those that were used in previous years.
- 9.4 The specific locations of the special schools and SRB's had not been confirmed yet. Specific work would be carried out to identify the locations.

9.5 The Committee would be interested to know the accurate figure that had been invested and this would be shared with Committee.

- 9.6 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Note changes to the capital programme since May 2018; and
 - Endorse the emerging priorities for further consideration.

10. Annual Review of the Norfolk County Council Adoption Agency

10.1 The Committee received the annexed report (10) which details the performance of the adoption service and include information such as performance in recruiting adopters and performance in finding adoptive families for children.

10.2 The Committee asked if there was post adoption support and additional therapeutic work offered if it was needed. Officers explained that the support fund model was used. Recently there had been changes made to the rules of the fund, which resulted in a delay in decisions for support being made. However, all outstanding applications had now been resolved.

10.3 The Committee heard that placements for children with complex needs could take a little longer than those without, however the process was no less rigorous, and it meant that the search for the adoptive family could go further afield.

10.4 The Committee congratulated the team on their 'outstanding' rating from Ofsted.

10.5 The Committee **ENDORSED** the Statement of Purpose for the Norfolk Adoption Service for year 2018/19.

11. Statement of Purpose of Norfolk's Fostering Services Annual Review

11.1 The Committee received the annexed report (11) which contained the statement of purpose which every fostering service had a statutory duty to publish. The report also focused on a performance review of the service.

11.2 The Committee felt it could be possible to encourage other employers to have a policy for time off for fostering duties, such as training, as NCC does. Officers explained that they try to accommodate people's working lives with creative solutions to delivering training through online ad network meetings.

11.3 The Committee heard that they were carrying out some work to review the rates for fostering panel members.

11.4 The Executive Director of Children's Services paid tribute to the fostering team. They were a willing team who were open to new ideas and change the way of working to ensure better outcomes for children.

11.5 The Committee **ENDORSED** the Statement of Purpose.

12. Annual Review of Norfolk's Residential Children's Homes

- 12.1 The Committee received the annexed report (12) which highlighted to Members the performance of and outcomes achieved by Norfolk's Residential Children's Homes Service, identifying the key performance outcomes achieved this year.
- 12.2 Officers reassured the Committee that the Children's Homes which had been identified in the press the morning of the Committee meeting were not those run by Norfolk County Council. Officers explained that if there is the requirement to use external run homes, the expectation is that they are good or outstanding. The Committee felt it was necessary to highlight these issues as corporate parents of the children of Norfolk. It was AGREED that the detail of the reported news would be reviewed and taken to the Corporate Parenting Board to then feed into a report for the March Children's Services Committee meeting. It was also felt appropriate to write a reply to the Press stating that they were not Local Authority homes.
- 12.3 The Committee heard that Norfolk have more Children's homes than is usually found, partly due to the risk involved in the management of such homes. NCC had stable and experienced staff who did a great job in supporting the families and children.
- 12.4 Officers explained that that the priority within the homes is for the children to return home. Various meetings with parents and families are held to help them with parenting skills and to help them respond to the behaviours that the children displayed. The Committee suggested that this was added to the ambition of the statement of purpose.
- 12.5 Although Members had heard that it was unusual to have nine homes, it was felt by some Members that it would be better to expand to ensure that NCC were in control and knew what was happening in all homes. The Committee asked about the impact of the new service for exploitation, and it would be helpful if details were fed into the report being taken to Corporate Parenting Board.
- 12.6 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Scrutinise the information within the report.
 - Challenge the service on the performance and outcomes achieved.
 - 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.

13. Recruitment and Retention – Social Workers

- 13.1 The Committee received the annexed report (13) which demonstrates improvements in increasing NCC's social worker capability against challenging workforce backdrop. The report provides an overview of the national picture in relation to recruiting and retaining social workers and how NCC bench mark to provide an overall picture of the current challenges.

- 13.2 The Committee heard that going forwards the department would have to be creative in finding solutions to the workforce. By reviewing the workforce and the new models of working, it would be possible to have fewer social workers as would use alternatively qualified professionals. By next summer, it was estimated that the department would be fully staffed in terms of social workers, except for the occasions of maternity, long term sickness or the delay in recruiting due to a resignation.
- 13.3 The Executive Director of Children's Services confirmed that the current position was to use agency staff where appropriate until the department were able to fully re-design the teams.
- 13.4 The Committee **NOTED** the report.
- 14. Committee Forward Plan and update on decisions taken under delegate authority**
- 14.1 The Committee received the annexed report (14) which set out the forward plan for the Committee to enable Members to shape future meetings, agendas and items for consideration.
- 14.2 Members suggested a report for the forward plan identifying what it is like to be a child with disabilities in Norfolk. It was recognised that the same cohort of children were affected by various challenges and the Committee hadn't reviewed this..
- 14.3 It was suggested that the SEND report scheduled for the January meeting may be deferred to March, as the report regarding the non-Local Authority Children's Homes had been scheduled for January.
- 14.3 The Committee **AGREED** the Forward Plan.

The meeting closed at 2.05pm.

Chairman



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CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

13 November 2018

5. Public Question Time**Karen Davis**

What is the average cost to the County Council of permanent exclusion per pupil, per year, and how does this compare to the per pupil per year cost of attachment outreach support?

NCC Children's Services commissions the Short Stay School for Norfolk to provide education for pupils who have been permanently excluded at a cost of £16,350 per pupil per year. NCC does not commission 'attachment outreach support' as part of any current education commissioned provision.

Rachel Batch

As the friend of an adoptive parent of two children who suffered early life trauma (prior to adoption), I would like to know what provision has been planned, in the SEND transformation plan, for children with SEMH needs in Norwich? How were the views of the parents of these children sought?

The SEND Transformation plans reflect current provision and future planned provision; currently in Norwich we have Eaton Hall Specialist Academy for SEMH which includes support for those with early life trauma and attachment difficulties. We are planning an expansion of our Specialist Resource Base (SRB) provision, hosted by mainstream schools, and these include SEMH provision. We are currently determining the locations of the new 170 funded places in total across the county and within each specialism. Parent views were sought as part of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy consultation last year and each new scheme will require public consultation within school re-organisation rules.

Hayley Clayton

I have been following with interest, articles in the EDP, Guardian and Your Place website (www.yourplaceschool.co.uk) about plans to open an alternative provision free school for trauma children in Norwich. As the DfE was clear Norfolk could submit two free school applications (one alternative), why was Norfolk's ambitions so low to only submit one application?

When considering our recent Free School application bid we considered the DfE guidance in detail and also had direct contact with link DfE advisers to ensure our interpretation of the guidance was correct. We were aware that the guidance highlighted the fact that it was 'highly unlikely' that two bids would be approved within a single local authority and, therefore, we submitted a bid that would meet need for the greatest number of children and was focussed on an evidence based and financially viable model of operating costs if approved.

Shirley Allinson

Would the Chair please advise how many and which, Children's Centres he has visited during his time in office and invite the other members of Committee to tell the room the same?

Supplementary question:

What did you learn from your visits and how has the information gathered informed the proposals to close 46 of Norfolk's Children's Centres?

"I have visited centres operated by three of the twelve providers across the county which highlighted just how varying each of the current children's centres are and how the different providers are delivering support to families. For example, in one centre activities are being provided in a stand-alone building, whilst in other areas, the focus is on outreach services. I am continuing to visit children's centres across the county and will be visiting all of the other providers

before Committee in January, when meaningful discussion and key decisions will be required. I have consistently encouraged all members of the committee to also visit centres.

“I also attended the consultation event at the Forum in Norwich, and in addition met with parents here in county hall. I have heard directly from members of the public, and those working with them, about their ideas about how services might improve and what they value about how they are currently being supported. I have urged everyone I’ve spoken with to engage in the consultation, so that their views are added into the feedback that will help shape the proposals being brought back to us in January.”

6. Local Member Issues / Member Questions

Mike Smith-Clare

How many alternative providers are currently supporting post 16 NEETs across the county? i.e their achievement and retention rates and Ofsted reports.

Officers have spoken to Mike Smith-Clare directly to clarify the question. Officers will provide Mike the answers to his question in due course.

How will responses from the current public consultation regarding Children’s Centres be presented to the Children’s Service Committee i.e. will this information be separated according to feedback from community groups, members of the public and District/Borough Councils?

“The complex task of collating and analysing all of the feedback received via our public consultation is being undertaken by staff within the Managing Director’s Unit and they are focused on providing a comprehensive consultation report that will inform the final proposals and recommendations being brought to Committee in January by officers in Children’s Services. The consultation report will include a full analysis of all the responses received, broken down into sections so that we can understand the views of members of the public as well as organisations and agencies working with families.”

Alexandra Kemp

Would the Committee develop a suite of “Invest to Save” Proposals for the Children’s Centre Service, to offer the public choice and a viable alternative, to the proposed changes?

Using the current budget differently, increasing the range of services in all Children’s Centre Premises, retaining Parents’ free face-to-face Advice Service and Universal Access to Professionally-run Support Groups, could save much larger sums, by avoiding children coming into care, the human and financial cost of anti-social behaviour, and the cost to the NHS and social care of physical and mental health inequalities. But, closing South Lynn Children’s Centre would increase inequality in South and West Lynn, West Winch and Clenchwarton.

“We have just ended our 8 week public consultation on transforming our children centre services through the proposal to develop an early childhood and family service. During the wide range of public events and discussions held as part of our consultation we have been able to speak directly with families across Norfolk, with staff working in the current children’s centres and other agencies and organisations supporting families in their communities, as well as with local councillors. We are now analysing all of the comments and suggestions we have received, as part of informing final proposals that will be presented to Committee in January. At this point in January, properly informed by the consultation, members of the committee will be asked to decide on how the agreed budget is best used to deliver improved outcomes for children and families, prevent demand for statutory services and improve social mobility.”

Emma Corlett

Please can the chair confirm:

- how all of the feedback received in the children’s centre consultation will be captured in the information that will be brought to committee in January
- that where closed consultation meetings have taken place between NCC and stakeholders, notes have been agreed as an accurate record by all present prior to submission to the consultation

- that councillors will have access to full, unredacted consultation responses

Can I refer to the reply given to Cllr Smith Clare about how feedback from the consultation will be brought to committee in January. Our discussions with a range of stakeholders have been an opportunity to answer questions that people had about what we were proposing and to hear from those present about their initial thoughts and ideas. Where notes were taken of meetings, these were to capture any themes within the discussion, not to capture the individual views of those present and on each occasion, participants were encouraged to complete a consultation feedback form or send their views into the consultation team. Many have clearly done so and we are very grateful for their comments and feedback. We have added the notes of any discussions into the consultation but clearly the volume of individual responses will significantly shape the analysis that is presented to Committee in January.

“All the feedback to the children’s centre consultation has been captured and added to our consultation hub Citizen Space. These responses are being coded and analysed and the findings will be included in a detailed report. The children’s centre consultation findings report will be presented, reviewed and discussed at our Children’s Services Committee meeting on 22 January 2019. Councillors can request to have access to the consultation responses which we received between 17th September – 12th November 2018. So we are in line with General Data Protection we will provide full details of all the comments and feedback to the consultation although any personal data such as names, IP trace, area and browser identification will be removed. We will keep members updated on the timing of when access can be given to view responses but expect it will be early to mid-December.”