

Children's Services Committee

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

Present:

Mrs P Carpenter - Chairman

Mr M Castle
Mr D Collis
Mr S Dark
Mr J Fisher
Mr T Garrod
Mr R Hanton

Mr E Maxfield
Mr G Middleton
Mr M Smith-Clare
Mr B Stone
Mrs C Walker
Mrs S Young

Church Representatives:

Mr P Dunning

The Chairman welcomed all Members and members of the public to the meeting. The Chairman informed the room that the adoption service had been had been finalists at the MJ Awards as well as the County Council and partners winning the public health award.

It was announced that item 13; 'School Organisation in Winterton and Hemsby' would be taken after item 7.

1. Apologies and substitutions

1.1 Apologies were received from Ms E Corlett, Mr R Price, Mrs S Squire, and Mr V Thomson who were substituted by Mrs C Walker, Mr T Garrod, Mr M Castle and Mrs S Young respectively, and Mrs H Bates.

2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2018

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2018 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman subject to an amendment at 12.2.5;
To replace: *"As Councillor for this area, he thanked Officers and was happy with progress."*
With: *"He thanked Officers on behalf of the Local Councillors who were happy with progress"*.

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 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.

4. Items of Urgent Business

4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

5. Public Question Time

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

5.2 Ayeshia Hammond Young asked a supplementary about extending the deadlines of the consultation to allow further discussion to be held with potential leaders of the schools. It was detrimental to close a school part way through the year. Officers replied that they had explored every view that they thought was possible which has led to the position they now find themselves in. They were concerned about the leadership and education of the children and to extend the deadline without adequate leadership and management of the school could jeopardise the education of the children. They were bound to timescales which were set out in the statute.

5.3 Caroline Sykes asked a supplementary regarding the percentage of monies spent on transport which don't directly support those children with SEND. Officers confirmed that there is continued need to help children and to transport where possible. There had not been any decisions made with regards to the suggested proposals and ongoing work would be undertaken to see if the proposals fit Norfolk.

5.4 Nicki Price asked a supplementary which suggested that it would be more expensive for Norfolk County Council to go through an appeals process for each parent, and instead they should consider the percentage of people who had already indicated on a private questionnaire that the proposals would not be suitable for them. Officers confirmed that they would be interested to see the feedback that had been given.

5.5 Tracy Bolch asked a supplementary about the number of children who live in the Great Yarmouth area but attend a school outside of this area. The Officers replied that this data would be sent to her after the meeting. She also asked if a special resource base (SRB) could be situated at Winterton Primary School or if it had been considered, which could strengthen the school and its provisions. Officers replied that to situate any SEND provision the greatest need of that area would be considered. SEND provision doesn't happen overnight and would take months and sometimes years to put into place. It would be inappropriate for a school without permanent leadership to take on a SRB. It was normally a good or better school that would have such a provision. Officers clarified further that Multi-Academy Trusts that could be suitable to take on Winterton would have been considered by the Regional Schools Commissioner.

6. Local Member Issues/Member Questions

- 6.1 There were three local member questions submitted which are attached at appendix 1.
- 6.2 Mr Smith-Clare asked for clarification around the cost of the security for the site and more information would be discussed with him.

7. Notice of Motions

- 7.1 The following motion was proposed by Ms Emma Corlett and seconded by Mr Mike Smith-Clare.

Children's Services Committee members:

- take seriously our responsibility to Norfolk Children and Young People and their families
- expect all Norfolk educational settings to be inclusive and make reasonable adjustments to support the learning needs of children and young people
- expect all Norfolk educational settings to use fixed-term exclusion only as a last resort sanction, having first sought advice from Norfolk County Council inclusion helpline at the earliest opportunity, -
- expect any Norfolk educational setting using exclusion to do so within the law
- note with concern the practice reported by some parents of 'unlawful exclusions' such as asking for children to be picked up from school early, or asking them to be kept at home during school trips
- note that some school staff may be unwittingly participating in an unlawful exclusion as they have not received adequate training

Committee Resolves to:

- request that officers set up an email reporting system to allow parents to report an unlawful exclusion or attempted unlawful exclusion (similar to the system currently implemented by Suffolk County Council)
- investigate any reported unlawful exclusions, and provide information and advice to schools
- report back to a future committee what action NCC is able to take against schools who are found to have unlawfully excluded
- request that a NCC-led media information campaign advising parents of the law and their rights, examples of the types of unlawful exclusions they might experience and how to report
- write to teaching and support staff trade unions and ask them to support the campaign, and raise awareness with their members of the law and illegal exclusions
- write to each school governing body and ask them to provide challenge to school leadership teams to ensure unlawful exclusions are not taking place in their schools, and to ensure their school staff have appropriate training

- 7.2 Following debate, and upon being put to a vote, with 6 votes for and 8 votes against, the motion was **LOST**.

13. School Organisation in Winterton and Hemsby

- 13.1 The Committee received the annexed report (13) from the Executive Director of Children's Services which provided information about a proposal for school organisation change for Winterton and Hemsby which was currently in the public domain.

- 13.2 The Committee heard from officers that steps had been taken to avoid a consultation of the proposed closure of Winterton Primary School. After various consultations and engagement with federations and partnerships it had become clear that there was no apparent option available for secure, long term sustainable leadership and the Interim Executive Board had recommended that there was a consultation on closure.
- 13.3 The Chairman asked for the clarification why the Interim Executive Board had been put into place. It was explained that in October 2017 a Warning Notice had been issued to the school by the LA as a result of concerns about the quality of leadership and governance. The Warning Notice contained some expectations and it was evident that it wasn't in the capacity of the governing body to deliver those expectations and therefore the LA had a duty to ensure IEB was put into place.
- 13.4 Some members felt it was a short-sighted view to close a school when there was a need for 300 homes per year in that area and 90% of those were in the Winterton and Hemsby area. Members were unsure how Officers could be confident that there would be sufficient places for children for the next 5 years. The families affected needed to be confident that there were alternative places for them. One of the alternative schools is Hemsby and it was felt that the access into that area was difficult and at times dangerous.
- 13.5 It was not the LA's role to contact individual trusts. The DFE would contact any suitable trusts on behalf of the LA and the school. They have assured NCC that they have had all the relevant conversations. NCC were not in a position to tell DfE what to do or whom to talk to.
- 13.6 Members wanted to ensure officers considered very carefully the development for Great Yarmouth as plans indicated a lot more houses. It would be inappropriate to close one school and spend money in years to come on a new school to cope with the demand of new families.
- 13.7 Officers explained that rigorous annual place planning and pupil forecasting was carried out which considered the need for school places in a particular area. One third of those pupils who attended Winterton were not in the Winterton catchment area. It was not expected that all pupils would want to go to one specific alternative school.
- 13.8 The Executive Director of Children's Services confirmed that all Officers had acted in a professional and dutiful manner having been asked to do something that would inevitably upset children, families and communities. Open and frank conversations had been held and evidence would suggest whether there was sufficient provision of education for children and young people.
- 13.9 The Committee heard that the transport policy would apply once the decision for closure had been taken. It was clarified that the current Headteacher was only in position until the end of the academic year and this was only the informal consultation phase.
- 13.10 The next steps were outlined by Officers; the consultation was closing on 24th July 2018. A report would be compiled to go to Director of Children's services which would base a decision to proceed to a formal notice which would last four weeks. A further report would be outlined and then a final decision would be made.

- 13.11 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- i) Note the Council's powers in respect of school organisation
 - ii) Note the current public consultation for Winterton and Hemsby and **AGREED** to encourage members of the public to engage with this process.
 - iii) Make any comments on the proposal for Winterton and Hemsby, to inform the Director's decision on whether to proceed to Statutory Notice after the end of the consultation period.
- 13.12 It was requested to note that Ms C Walker, Mr M Smith-Clare and Mr D Collis did not agree with the recommendations.

There was a break for 20 minutes.

8. Performance Monitoring Report

- 8.1 The Committee received the annexed report (8) from the Executive Director of Children's Services which focused primarily on the data as at end of April 2018. In addition to the vital signs performance the report also contained other key performance information via the (MI) report (appendix 2).
- 8.2 The Assistant Director for Performance, Planning and Quality Assurance introduced Tracy McLean, Head of Children, Young People and Maternity Services for Norfolk and Waveney (hosted by Great Yarmouth and Waveney CCG) to the Committee to explain more about the data concerning health assessments which had been a real focus over the last six months. More general practitioners had been recruited specifically to undertake the health assessments within the specified timeframe of 20 days. The latest data showed that 93% were being completed within the timeframe, and there was a story to justify those which weren't. Outstanding health assessments were now being tracked on a weekly basis.
- 8.3 The projection of completed health assessments should show an upward trend once Liquid Logic was working to its full potential. This would hopefully be after approximately 6 months. Practitioners were happy with the way that the system was developing and officers felt assured that it wouldn't take any longer. There were ways of pulling data out manually but this was a long process.
- 8.4 The Committee heard that a detailed breakdown of exclusions by location would be presented at the next meeting. However, in response to a question regarding the situation in Great Yarmouth, the Committee heard that a high level of exclusions was still an issue in Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Norwich centre and there was still a prevalence in the same schools. Engagement was being held with schools about why inclusions were happening and annual conversations were held with Chief Executives of academies as well as the Regional Schools Commissioner.
- 8.5 Members felt that they wouldn't want to see a young child labelled young by having been excluded at an early age. The data showed that there had been an increase in young exclusions. Maintained nurseries were included in the data. It was clarified that exclusions had to go through a process and would have to be ratified by the Governing Body. Further information was requested on the differences of exclusions between maintained schools and academies.

- 8.6 Officers confirmed that on a national level, exclusions were the highest in the Autumn term and this was the same in Norfolk. Funding was being given to Norfolk to work with the 7 most likely to exclude schools. Current data showed that the most common reason for a permanent exclusion was persistent disruptive behaviour. To prevent additional exclusions in that child's school life, it needed provision, support and advice. For some excluded children they would be placed on the right path and receive the right education, but this wasn't the case for all. There were comprehensive packages for early intervention and changes were being made in other areas to help overcome the bigger challenges.
- 8.7 The Committee noted that too many social worker assessments were still not being completed within the 45 days. Officers recognised that this was an area of improvement and there was a renewed focus on timescales and quality. There were local difference and problems within certain localities e.g. staffing issues, which affected the data. However, when the data was broken down, the cases relating to high risk, vulnerable young people showed stronger performance. There had been some more recent improvements as a result of reduced volumes of assessments and management practice including social worker tracker being introduced recently, learning workshops taking place, regular meetings with heads of service to monitor performance and weekly team meetings looking at the data.
- 8.8 The Committee heard that the figures for the education, health and care plans (EHCP) were low in getting them completed in the 20-week timescales. Norfolk had a high percentage of SEND pupils compared to the national average and staffing was under resourced in the department and there had been a rise in the referrals. Whilst there has been some improvement, it is hoped that it would improve further.
- 8.9 The Committee **REVIEWED** and **COMMENTED** on the performance data, information and analysis presented in the vital sign report cards and determined that the recommended actions identified were appropriate

9. Revenue Budget Monitoring

- 9.1 The Committee received the annexed report (9) from the Executive Director of Children's Services which set out the month 2 financial forecast for Children's Services and the programme of transformation and improvement that was continuing.
- 9.2 The Committee noted the plans outlined in the report and expressed concern of the scale of the work needed to be undertaken. Officers were cautiously optimistic about the budget forecast and what was needed to achieve it.
- 9.3 Officers explained that the dedicated schools grant was split into three elements which was determined nationally; the schools block which was the main school budget; the high needs block, which was managed by the Local Authority and was essentially a flat rate grant year on year and the early years element. The Executive Director explained that even with the reforms
- 9.4 The Committee expressed concern that the transport costs were £10m higher than staffing.
- 9.5 The Committee **RESOLVED**;
- i) To approve the service transformation and improvement achieved
 - ii) To approve the forecast outturn of £3.375m for General Fund Children's Services

- iii) To approve the forecast use of Children's Services General Fund reserves and provisions
- iv) To approve the forecast outturn of £3.142m for Dedicated Schools Grant Children's Services
- v) To approve the management action being undertaken to bring expenditure within budget in 2018/19

10. Risk Management

- 10.1 The Committee received the annexed report (10) from the Executive Director of Children's Services which provided them with a full Children's departmental risk register, as at July 2018, following the latest review conducted in June 2018. The report presented the risks by exception.
- 10.2 The Committee;
- a) **NOTED** the risks reported by exception from the Children's Services departmental risk register (Appendix A);
 - b) **NOTED** the reconciliation report (Appendix B);
 - c) **AGREED** the recommended mitigating actions identified in Appendix A for the risks presented were appropriate;
 - d) **NOTED** the background information on risk management (Appendix D).

11. Norfolk Youth Justice Plan 2018-2021

- 11.1 The Committee received the annexed report (11) from the Executive Director of Children's Services which outlined the redesigned Norfolk Youth Justice Plan. It highlighted the actions, risks and opportunities to ensure that the desired outcomes for young people and the victims of their crime were achieved by Norfolk Youth Offending Team in 2018-21.
- 11.2 The vice-Chairman asked if the lack of a base budget due to the nature of Youth Offending Team funding caused difficulties when setting their budget. It was confirmed that although it could cause complications, it was that way due to the four agencies contributing to the budget, who themselves could know at last minute what their own budgets would be. It was a national picture and it was worked around.
- 11.3 The Committee **NOTED** the details contained in the Norfolk Youth Justice Plan 2018-21 and **RECOMMENDED** them to Council.

12. Meeting Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Quality, Sufficiency and Funding

- 12.1 The Committee received the annexed report from the Executive Director of Children's Services which explained the Local Authority duty to ensure the sufficiency of places for children and young people identified and assessed as having a Special Educational Need or Disability.
- 12.2 The Committee heard that the Government had asked for Local Authority's to express an interest for a bid for capital funding for one of the schools. It hadn't been specified when the bid application would be open, and if it wasn't successful, the plans would still go ahead.

- 12.3 An inclusions challenge partner had been recruited to increase the capacity to challenge school provision for SEND pupils.. Costings had deliberately not been added to the report as the feasibility study would look into the options available. The location of the new schools would reduce travel time to within an hour. The feasibility study would indicate where the demand was and where any gaps were. The Committee asked for a specific deadline for the feasibility study and it was agreed it would be brought to the November meeting.
- 12.4 It was pointed out that the Diocese of Norwich had some buildings that could be used. Further conversations about this would take place.
- 12.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
1. To understand the duties placed on the Local Authority in relation to pupils with SEND
 2. To agree the direction of travel in relation to the current high level invest to save / budget recovery plan for the High Needs Block
 3. To agree plans to explore feasibility study / impact of capital development planning for increased specialist provision across the county
 4. To agree that further options are more fully explored in relation to travel arrangements for some children and young people with SEND, where it is suitable and at the current level, agreed with them and appropriate, and a detailed business case is brought back to CS Committee, outlining risks and benefits of any new proposals for travel and transport.

14. Recruitment and Retention

- 14.1 The Committee received the annexed report (14) from the Executive Director of Children's Services which advised members of the status, progress and continuing plans to ensure a stable and well-resourced workforce.
- 14.2 This item was deferred to the September meeting.

15. Review of Children's Services MASH

- 15.1 The Committee received the annexed report (15) from the Executive Director of Children's Services
- 15.2 This item was deferred to the September meeting.

16. Children Centre Service Re-Design Update

- 16.1 The Committee received the annexed report (15) from the Executive Director of Children's Services which provided an update to the Committee on the timeline for the re-design of children centre services.
- 16.2 The timeframe of the Children's Centre Service re-design had been changed to ensure that the new system was not being designed separately from the rest of the system and it was a joined-up approach. The new timescales would also mean that the consultation period was not over the summer holidays.
- 16.3 The Committee considered that it was the decision to allow more time to have detailed discussions to have new and cost-effective services. Some Members felt that as they were appropriate lifelines to communities, the re-design needed to be right.

- 16.4 It was hoped that contracts could be put out to tender with an award contract date of 1st April 2019. Although it was appreciated that this would be tight, the lead in time had increased to 6 months from 4 months in the previous timescales. It would mean that general conversations would be held at the end of 2018, with recommendations being approved by Committee in January 2019.
- 16.5 Rurality needed to be considered if building sharing was an option in the re-design. Services were needed but travelling between rural areas was sometimes challenging.
- 16.6 As Committee members, it was important to reassure members of the public that Children's Centre services would remain in some form. There were areas of deprivation which relied heavily on the services that Children's Centres provided.
- 16.7 The Committee **NOTED** the updated timeline for children centre services re-design
- 17. Committee Forward Plan and update on decisions taken under delegate authority**
- 17.1 The Committee received the annexed report (17) which set out the forward plan for the Committee to enable Members to shape future meetings, agendas and items for consideration.
- 17.2 It was noted that the two items at today's meeting which hadn't been discussed ('Recruitment and Retention' and 'Review of Children's Services MASH') would be added to the forward plan for the September meeting.
- 17.3 The Executive Director added 'Children's Transformation Programme' to the list for the September meeting.
- 17.4 The Committee **AGREED** the Forward Plan at Appendix A with the additions as noted above.

The meeting closed at 3.20pm.

Chairman



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CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

10 July 2018

5. Public Question Time

Ayeshia Hammond Young on behalf of Save Winterton Primary

Question: As accepted by the IEB, all options that could lead to Winterton Primary remaining viable have not been investigated. Given this, can we request the key dates in the timeline (end of initial consultation and proposed closure date) to be extended thus allowing these options to be pursued? This will give the school the best chance of remaining open which I hope we all agree would be the best outcome.

Response: Two suggestions were made at the public meeting, both of which have been considered by the council or the Department for Education. Neither of these are viable options for the school and therefore the consultation timeline remains. We will consider all of the responses carefully before a decision is made about the school's future

Supplementary

Can we request a decision is made on this at the 10th July meeting as we need to communicate this information to the school and wider community before the end of the current academic year which is fast approaching?

Tracey Dye

Question: The fact that Norfolk has on average 170 fewer places in SRB's than the national average, how many new places are actually going to be funded in this plan ?

Response: The current evidence for need, now and in the future, suggests that we need to plan approximately 170 new places across the county. The feasibility study will include looking at how we can finance any capital programme.

Teresa Goldie

Question: Can you tell me how the new 4 special schools are going to be funded?

Response: This is something we will exploring as part of our feasibility work. We recognise this strategy will require significant investment and we will be looking at how we can finance a project of this scale.

Beate Knights

Question: Will the new special school in Great Yarmouth still be funded via the free school route?

Response: All new schools have to be established as Free Schools. The process available by central government includes capital funding to provide the premises and building and the government has stated an intention to invite expressions of interest this summer. No documentation is available for this yet. Local authorities can also commission a new school via the 'Free School Presumption' route. In these cases, the capital cost has to be covered by the council. The revenue funding for special schools is provided via the Designated Schools Grant – High Needs Block.

Gabrielle Jordan

Question: How many of these new special schools will be funded via the free school route?

Response: All new schools have to be established as Free Schools. The process available by Central Government includes capital funding to provide the premises and building and the government has stated an intention to invite expressions of interest this summer. No documentation is available for this yet, but the DfE website states an intention for 30 schools to be commissioned nationally.

Kirsty Gant

Question: LA funded pilot, Attachment Outreach Support, has reduced exclusions for trauma children, by supporting the child, school and family. They plan to open an AP Free School - the first Trauma school in the UK. Significantly they have the support of Minister Nadhim Sahawi, Norfolk MPs, national and international experts and a compelling business case. Their plans compliment LA plans, whilst bringing a good news story to Norfolk. Is the LA consulting with the Wensum Trust as this proposal, in addition to producing significant savings, presents a no cost option to the LA for two years and then only a small cost in the 3rd year?

Response: We continue to discuss a range of proposals with individual trusts, schools and also Educate Norfolk (the Headteacher Association for mainstream schools in Norfolk). We have to consider any proposals alongside our SEND sufficiency strategy. We look forward to seeing Wensum Trust's business case.

Caroline Sykes

Question: Given that the main purpose of the proposed change to Home to School transport policy is to save money, first identified in 2015 (NCC Risk Number RM14284) what consideration has been given to the cost of the implementation of this scheme given that each child will have to be assessed at least yearly, as well the additional costs involved in promoting independence (TITAN) for those children identified as being able to walk to a pick up point?

Response: We want to reduce travel time and increase independence for children with special educational needs and disabilities but we would only ever explore this for the right children and families. We want to look in more detail at these proposals and if we proceed we will carry out consultation and fully consider any costs.

Hanna Seary

Question: Currently, NCC is responsible for Home to School transport, not schools. Who will be responsible for carrying out the eligibility assessments for the proposed 'pick up points'?

Response: As with all current travel arrangements the final decision is based on the input of the family, the school and local authority teams. If the proposal goes ahead, the council would coordinate these assessments.

Eliot Sykes

Question: "If further exploration is agreed by councillors we intend to continue our existing work with individual children with the potential to achieve some greater independence in travel, as well as take a measured approach to trying out some new approaches where families, schools and the children and young people concerned are willing and able to participate." What would happen if families are not willing and/or able to participate?

Response: Our experience is that independence travel training is only successful when there is full, positive, involvement of all of those involved. This is what we would want for any expanded scheme.

Nicki Price, SENSational Families

Question: Given that there is bound to be some disagreement between the assessors and families as to whether a child would be eligible for pick up point / collection, what right to appeal will families have?

Response: There would be the right of appeal, as there is with the current transport policy.

Charlotte Parish

Question: What will be the eligibility criteria in order for a child to access drop off points?

Response: We have not yet determined if this part of the consultant's proposals should go ahead. If the proposals progress further there will be consultation with families about how it might work, including the eligibility criteria.

Fiona Sayer

Question: On 2nd July Norfolk County Council stated "These recommendations build on Norfolk's excellent track record with independence travel training and our current pilot of personalised travel options; both of which have been developed with schools and parent/carer groups"

I believe that actually NCC goal is to save transport costs, not to improve independence.

Can NCC advise which schools and parent/carers groups have been working with NCC specifically on SEN collection points?

Response: If the proposals progress further then we will consult with families, parents/carer groups and schools. We work closely with these groups to develop our policies around special educational needs and disabilities.

Tracy Bolch

Question: In view of the fact that the Children's Services team have recognised the lack of provision for specialist schools in this area and are suggesting four new special schools and more specialist resource bases, why is there a proposal for the closure of Winterton Primary; a perfectly suited school with experience and a good record of educating SEN children?

Response: Winterton is a mainstream school and these new schools would provide support for children with more complex needs and disabilities.

The consultation into the future of Winterton School is ongoing and we will consider all of the comments and feedback before reaching a decision.

6. Local Member Issues / Member Questions

Mike Smith-Clare

Question: Following the July closure of Alderman Swindell Primary School, will the Sport England and originally Sure Start funded CAASTLE community centre and hub, remain open to the community - particularly in respect to the important role it plays in providing local community support and activity?

Supplementary:

What is the anticipated cost of providing security for the closed Alderman Swindell site and over what period of time is this cost expected to last for?

Response: The community usage of the facilities at Alderman Swindell has passed to North Denes Primary School. There were a total of six groups with bookings at the CASSTLE who were all offered facilities at North Denes Primary, and all but one of these has gone across. The one that hasn't have changed to a morning class as they are an older people's group.

The site security process is the same as for other vacant school sites across the county but firm costs are yet to have been established. The timescales for reuse of the site are dependent on the SEN Sufficiency Strategy and progress on this scheme will be monitored by Capital Priorities Group and reported as appropriate to Children's Services Committee as part of the capital programme.

Mick Castle

PROCUREMENT OF NEW SPECIAL SCHOOL, ALDERMAN SWINDELL SCHOOL SITE, YARMOUTH

Question: Please can the Chairman update me on what progress has been made thus far with regard to achieving a Free School application by a suitable provider to deliver a new Special School on the soon-to-be redundant Alderman Swindell School site?

Supplementary: Given the acknowledged need for 4 new Special Schools across the County to meet "Sufficiency" it is vitally important that this project is "fast-tracked" given that buildings and land are already there and a feasibility study has already been undertaken. Can she tell me whether such a bid is likely in time for the 6th September Government deadline? And if not, when is the next application round scheduled to take place?

Response: The September 6th date relates to bids for mainstream schools

We have funding for the feasibility work and this is now getting underway. We will be ready to submit an expression of interest when the next round opens to specialist schools. We expect these to be approved early in 2019.

We will seek to fast track processes as much as possible, however the timescales for any building project depend on the successful completion of five stages, these include feasibility, design, planning, procurement and construction. Each take a number of weeks/months and previous projects indicate that the overall completion could be achieved within 2 years.

In the meantime, we will explore interim use of the building, where an existing provider can support specialist provision prior to the new specialist provision being opened.

Emma Corlett

Question: It is now over a year that committee has been waiting for a meeting with the Regional School's Commissioner, and seven weeks since committee suggested a separate meeting be set up at the convenience of the Regional School's Commissioner. What progress has been made since committee last met on setting up this meeting?

Response: The RSC is happy to meet with the committee but has so far only been able to offer one date, which was not suitable. We will continue to seek a date with her to attend a meeting with the committee during the autumn term 2018.