

Children's Services Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 17 October 2017
10am, Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

Present:

Mrs P Carpenter – Chairman

Ms E Corlett

Mr S Dark – Vice-Chairman

Mr J Fisher

Mr C Foulger

Mr R Hanton

Mr G Middleton

Mr M Sands

Mr M Smith-Clare

Mr E Seward

Mrs A Thomas

Mr V Thomson

Mrs S Young

Church Representatives:

Mr P Dunning

1 Apologies and substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mr D Collis (Mr M Sands substituted); Mr B Stone (Mr C Foulger substituted); Mr R Price (Mrs A Thomas substituted); Mr E Maxfield (Mr E Seward substituted) and Mrs H Bates (Co-Opted Church Representative).

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the Children's Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 12 September 2017 were agreed as an accurate record by the Committee and signed by the Chairman.
- 2.2 The updated actions from the last meeting would be circulated to the Committee.
- 2.3 In reply to the question raised at the last meeting by Ms Corlett about the division between primary and high school exclusion ages, the Assistant Director Education advised that the number of pupils waiting for full-time provision had changed since the last meeting and that an up-to-date list by pupil age would be circulated to the Committee.

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.

Mr M Sands declared an other interest as his wife was a teacher at Free School Norwich.

Mr C Foulger declared an interest as his son and daughter-in-law were teachers.

4 Items of Urgent Business

- 4.1 The Committee **agreed** to consider the urgent item raised by Ms E Corlett, to consider what the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Report, published on 13 October and placing Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) back in special measures, meant for the children and young people in Norfolk. Ms Corlett also asked the Committee to consider what it could do on behalf of all the children in Norfolk and whether the outstanding actions from the Children & Young People Mental Health Task and Finish Group should be reviewed.
 - 4.1.1 Members agreed that this was a very serious issue as there were a lot of young people who were facing challenges which may not meet the threshold of intervention for mental health services.
 - 4.1.2 The Chairman of the Committee welcomed Mr D Ashcroft, Chairman of Norfolk Safeguarding Children's Board who said he shared the Committee's frustration that progress was not being made quickly enough and urged the Committee to consider how it could help, as the CQC report provided an excellent opportunity to work with key partners to commission an effective range of services.
 - 4.1.3 The Interim Executive Director of Children's Services advised that, along with some Councillors, he had recently attended a National Children and Adult Services Conference in Bournemouth where the issue of resourcing to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) posts nationally had been recognised. He added that a plan to recommission CAMHS provision was being developed and a report would be brought to the Committee in the future about recommissioning the CAMHS service. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to consider a report at a future meeting and the Chairman said that the possibility of setting up a Task and Finish Group could be debated at that time.
- 4.2 The Chairman raised an additional item of urgent business which had recently arisen in her Division, about the safeguarding policies and training in place at District Councils for people who applied for taxi licences. The Chairman asked Members of the Committee to check that their local District Council had policies in place. Mrs Young confirmed that she was a Member of the Licensing and Appeals Committee and that King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council had adopted appropriate policies.

5 Public Question Time

- 5.1 The public questions received and the responses are attached at Appendix A.
- 5.2 As a supplementary question, Ms A Gould asked if the Council agreed that there should be an option to secondary education provision over the two existing Great Yarmouth/Southtown sites.

The Assistant Director Education replied that Norfolk County Council's duty was to provide a sufficient number of school places for children to access education

provision and that it was not the responsibility of the local authority to insist how that provision should be delivered.

5.3 Mr P Smith asked the following supplementary question:

“120 Children living in the Southtown and Cobholm areas of Great Yarmouth will otherwise require a 5 mile journey to access secondary school places, which we believe to be environmentally damaging and also not reflective of the needs of an urban residential area. Does the committee agree this demonstrates a clear need for these secondary school places at both Trafalgar College and Great Yarmouth Charter Academy to be protected?”

The Head of Place Planning and Organisation, Children's Services responded that any secondary school should be of sufficient size to provide a varied curriculum and sufficient pupil capacity. As part of the planning process, the planning authority would need to satisfy itself about the sustainability of the travel plans as well as access arrangements for vehicles and children before approving any planning application.

5.4 As a supplementary question, Ms G Kendrick asked how it was acceptable, when no consultation had taken place, as stipulated in the Admissions Act.

The Head of Place Planning and Organisation, Children's Services advised that Academies were their own admission authority and had their own admissions policy.

6 Local Member Issues/Member Questions

6.1 The Local Member questions received, together with the responses, are attached at Appendix B.

7 Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring 2017-18.

7.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services setting out the performance data, information and analysis presented in the vital sign report cards.

7.2 Impact of Support for Education Improvement

7.2.1 The Assistant Director Education advised that the validated Key Stage 4 data was not yet available, although unvalidated results indicated Norfolk schools remained slightly below national average. The Committee would receive more detail at its next meeting. With regard to Exclusions, the Assistant Director Education advised that a needs analysis had been carried out and the Committee would be receiving a more detailed statement at its next meeting.

7.2.2 In response to questions from the Committee, the following points were noted:

7.2.2.1 Any known inappropriate practices carried out by some schools asking children, in danger of being excluded to leave before they were excluded, leaving them without a school place, were being monitored. Following a recent restructure within Children's Services, a team had been established to monitor children missing from education and those young people who were being home-schooled.

- 7.2.2.2 There was some correlation between attainment results and deprivation across the county, although this was not always the case. Some work was being done to try to encourage stronger performing schools to work with weaker schools to help them improve their results.
- 7.2.2.3 The number of pupils being home-schooled would be provided to the Committee.
- 7.2.2.4 The Assistant Director Education advised that the Early Needs Analysis document had been shared with the Department for Education, Regional Schools Commissioner and all schools.
- 7.2.2.5 There were a number of factors which had contributed to the post-16 education results for June 2017. The Committee was reassured that the actual percentage of youngsters, where it was not known where they were, was less than 1%. The majority of pupils were moving into employment or work-based training. The Committee requested access to the monitoring system so they could track the breakdown by district.
- 7.2.2.6 Further education colleges were currently considering whether some higher education provision could be delivered as an outreach service, although only a limited range of courses could be offered. A meeting of the 16-19 Strategy Group had been convened to consider post-16 education.
- 7.2.2.7 There was insufficient evidence to establish whether some pupils were being managed out of a course at the end of year 12 because they had not achieved acceptable results during the course, although the Committee was advised that Norfolk County Council did not have any remit to challenge schools in this area.
- 7.2.2.8 The Committee was reassured that the pressure placed by health providers to improve the Initial Health Assessment performance was starting to improve the results. The issue was being closely monitored by the Children's Services Improvement Board.

The meeting adjourned at 11.20am and reconvened at 11.30am.

7.3 Early Help

- 7.3.1 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
- 7.3.2 The new Liquid Logic software recording system was due to be introduced in March 2018 which would make tracking the journey of a child simpler as it would be used for children supported by Early Help as well as social work.
- 7.3.3 The drop in the percentage of Child Protection (CP) - % children seen from 89.3% in August 2016 to 49.2% in August 2017 was due to the change in the performance measure from every 20 days to every 10 days. When compared with the old parameter, the performance had been maintained and the data for September 2017 indicated a significant improvement in this area. It was expected that the target of 100% would be achieved within the next 2-3 months and the Committee was reassured that children were likely to be seen more frequently than the figures indicated.
- 7.3.4 Adult Social Care Department would be adopting the Liquid Logic reporting system before Children's Services to make the transition more manageable. Also, Ofsted

were due to carry out an inspection of Children's Services in the very near future and it had been considered that it would be best to get the inspection completed before a new reporting system was adopted. This had also meant that Children's Services had been able to learn from Adult Social Care about how the system was working.

7.4 Social Work

- 7.4.1 The management team at Great Yarmouth was working on a number of local initiatives to engage with partners and colleagues to address issues which had been identified, particularly in understanding re-referral rates.
- 7.4.2 With regard to the Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews in the month – Child Participated percentage, young people were able to send their comments through parents, foster carers, or their Independent Reviewing Officer, rather than always attending the meeting.
- 7.4.3 Norfolk County Council had a caseload policy in place. To try to reduce social worker caseloads, and following the loss of some staff over the summer period, more agency staff and newly qualified (36) social workers had been placed in the county, although this initiative would take time to bed in and show an improvement in caseloads.
- 7.4.4 Future reports would include the target figures for the number of caseloads per social worker in each team.
- 7.4.5 Norfolk County Council currently employed between 40 and 60 agency social workers, covering vacancies, maternity leave or other absences. The programme run by the University of East Anglia to train social workers continued and it was hoped that up to 60 additional newly qualified social workers could soon be employed by Norfolk County Council.
- 7.4.6 The Committee received a copy of the Norfolk Threshold Guide, produced by the Norfolk Safeguarding Children's Board, setting out the approach to Section 47 assessments to keep children in Norfolk safe and protected from harm. The Guide had been in use for the last few months and had been well received. The online version of the document can be found on the following link:
<https://www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/threshold-guide/>
- 7.4.7 The Committee requested a training session, where they could see a simulation of initial assessments, to give Members an overview of the assessments and to help them understand the work of social workers. The Interim Executive Director of Children's Services advised that real cases could not be used and if Members were willing to attend such training it would be arranged.

7.5 Financial Implications

In response to questions from the Committee, the following points were noted:

- 7.5.1 A written response would be provided about the reasons for the Adoption All overspend of 35% and why the budget had not been set at 2016-17 levels which may have avoided the overspend.

7.5.2 The mechanism for recovery of funding when a child had been excluded was being developed by the Schools Forum. This would mean that when a child was excluded from one school, the new school would be able to claim the funding.

7.6 The Committee unanimously **RESOLVED** to:

- Note the performance data, information and analysis presented in the vital sign report cards.

8 Demand Management & Prevention Strategy: Children's Services.

8.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services setting out the Demand Management and Prevention Strategy for Children's Services which, as one of the 7 priorities agreed by Policy & Resources Committee in July 2017 as part of the transformation programme, would be at the heart of transforming children's services and making it both financially sustainable by 2022 and fit for the future.

8.2 In response to questions from the Committee, the following points were noted:

8.2.1 Policy & Resources Committee would be receiving a report about Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) at its meeting on 30 October. The report would then be presented to Children's Services Committee.

8.2.2 The Executive Director advised that East Sussex had adopted a similar Strategy which had run for approximately 3 years finishing in 2014. When the project had completed, there had been fewer looked after children and the budget had been sustainable.

8.2.3 Norfolk County Council Children's Services did not have a significant EU workforce at the present time which would have any post-Brexit implications, although it did have significant vacancy recruitment issues. A re-skilling exercise had been completed recently, for example the Edge of Care Service with Barnardo's which had led to staff working in a different way, and although not all problems with recruiting social workers had been solved, significant improvements had been made in the last year. It was recognised that Norfolk County Council faced significant workforce challenges as did many other organisations.

8.2.4 In cases where a vacancy had been filled through internal promotion, the Committee was reassured that backfilling arrangements were in place.

8.2.5 It was anticipated that the social work teams would expand and contract over the lifetime of the project, dependant on where the work was needed. Once the number of looked after children was under control and reduced, it was expected that the staff could be redirected into other vacancies within the County Council.

8.2.6 One of the areas the Social Impact Bond (SIB) project team were considering was how and where the investment would need to be targeted. Specific groups and projects would be identified and there were different ways to split the work. The exact details were in the process of being worked out.

8.2.7 The monitoring arrangements for the SIB would be established between the provider and the Commissioner, the detail of which was not yet known.

- 8.2.8 The Project Board would set the financial and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) milestones where the money would be drawn-down once the milestones were triggered and achieved. This aspect would be overseen by Policy & Resources Committee and Children's Services Committee retrospectively, with Members being consulted when any money was released.
- 8.2.9 The Committee **agreed** that a brief overview of the project would be included as part of the Performance Monitoring Report in future, together with key KPIs from the project, with an annual report on the progress of the transformation programme.
- 8.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to **Note** that:
- the Demand Management and Prevention Strategy has been agreed as one of the 7 council priorities.
 - the Policy & Resources Committee has agreed the allocation of a one-off investment of £12-15m into children's services over the four years, 2018-2022.
 - the money will be held centrally, overseen by the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and drawn down only in line with the pre-agreed milestones.

The Committee **AGREED** to:

- Receive an annual report on the progress of the transformation programme, in the same cycle as the P&R Committee and to scrutinise the plans, spend and savings, against agreed milestones, contained in that report.

9 Strategic & Financial Planning 2018-19 to 2021-22.

- 9.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services providing an update on the Service Committee's detailed planning to feed into the Council's budget process for 2018-19. The report formed part of the strategic and financial planning framework for Service Committees and provided an update on the Council's budget setting process setting out the details of the actions required by Service Committees to enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2018-19.
- 9.2 In response to questions by the Committee, the following points were noted:
- 9.2.1 In response to a request for an additional table showing the Allocation of new MTFs 2018-22 savings required by Committee spread over 4 years rather than 3, it was clarified that the report had been produced in line with the remit from Policy & Resources Committee.
- 9.2.2 Although some preliminary work had been carried out on how children's centres could be merged, it was not yet possible to be specific about what the service could look like. Members were assured that, once the details had been considered, if the conclusion was that the proposals could not be delivered, different ways of saving money would need to be identified.
- 9.2.3 There were a number of assumptions about capping expenditure that were included in the project. A 1% pay increase was assumed, for example, so any award above that would need to be funded by Government or covered by further cuts. It was expected that funding would be replaced through business rates and other revenue,

but the details were not yet known. The Committee was assured that any planning assumptions currently in place would be revised as necessary.

9.2.4 The Committee was reminded that if they did not agree to any of the proposals being considered being put out to consultation, other savings would need to be identified to meet the overall target.

9.3 Upon each recommendation being put to a vote:

- The Committee unanimously **RESOLVED to Note** that the budget planning assumptions for 2018-19 are unchanged from the September 2017 Children's Services Committee Strategic and Financial Planning 2018-19 to 2021-22 paper.
- The Committee unanimously **RESOLVED to Agree** the service-specific budgeting issues for 2018-19 as set out in sections 3 and 4 of the report.
- The Committee unanimously **RESOLVED to Agree** that there are no planned or proposed savings for 2018-19 which could be implemented during 2017-18 to provide an in-year saving in addition to those already reflected in the forecast position and reported as part of the September 2017 Children's Services committee Strategic & Financial Planning 2018-19 to 2021-22 paper.
- The Committee unanimously **RESOLVED to Agree** whether any savings identified for 2019-20 have the capacity to be brought forward to 2018-19.
- With 9 votes in favour, 4 votes and no abstentions, the Committee **RESOLVED to Agree** proposed new savings for 2018-19 (Table 4 of the report) for recommendation to Policy & Resources Committee, including those which will require consultation.

10 As this was the last meeting the Interim Executive Director of Children's Services would be attending the Committee placed on record its thanks to Matt Dunkley for the work he had undertaken during his term of employment and wished him well in his new role.

The meeting closed at 1.35p.m.

Chairman



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Public Questions for Children's Services Committee 17 October 2017

5. Public Question Time

- **Question from Louise Alderman**

Could the committee please note the opposition of Great Yarmouth residents, parents and children to the current Inspiration Trust consultation of the merger between Great Yarmouth Charter Academy and Trafalgar College as publicised in various media outlets and by a protest march held in Great Yarmouth on Saturday 7th October.

Reply:

Members of the Committee will be aware of the merger proposal and of reports in the media of opposition to the proposal. However it is important to recognise that the County Council is neither the proposer nor the Decision-maker in the matter. The proposer, the Inspiration Trust, has held a consultation process to enable all views on the proposal to be expressed and it will be their decision as to whether to take the matter forward when they have considered those views.

- **Question from Mark Alderman**

On this point we ask if the committee agrees that the proposed changes to the current admissions arrangements for 2018 entry to Trafalgar college in that the Inspiration Trust Proposal outlines that students selecting Trafalgar college will be educated at Great Yarmouth Charter Academy is considerably outside of the consultation window as specified in the admissions code (Regulation 18 of the School Admissions Regulations 2012) and therefore should be rejected by the County council for inclusion in the current admissions arrangements?

Reply:

Trafalgar College is currently open and parents are entitled to express preferences for any state funded school that will be open in September 2018. Where and how Inspiration Trust proposes to provide an education for children that gain a place at Trafalgar College does not form part of the admission arrangements and is not covered by admission regulations.

- **Question from James Dwyer**

The admissions arrangements for Great Yarmouth Charter Academy and Trafalgar College state the following "Arrangements for application for places at the academy will be made in accordance with the Local Authority's (LA) co-ordinated admission

arrangements". Can the committee confirm co-ordinated admission arrangements also includes determination of the schools catchment areas?

Reply:

Catchment areas can form part of the admission criteria for a school and would be set by the admission authority for each school, not by the local Authority.

- **Question from Gemma Kendrick**

The Schools finder information on The Norfolk County Council website relating to catchment and feeder schools for Trafalgar College was amended on Monday 9th October, could the committee explain why the changes were made during a live admissions application period?

Reply:

Norfolk's admission arrangements seek to accurately reflect the policy of every school in Norfolk but we review and amend our guidance at all times to ensure we correctly display all schools arrangements. The legally binding information for any own admission authority school is published by that admission authority, Inspiration Trust for Trafalgar College.

- **Question from Matthew Holehouse**

The previous (now closed school) Great Yarmouth (VA) High School had a determined catchment and feeder schools. The inspiration Trust have told parents there is no specified catchment or feeders for the new sponsored academy Great Yarmouth Charter Academy, this is a change of admissions for the current admissions round by the academy sponsor over the previously agreed and published admissions arrangements by Norfolk County Council, without consultation. Can the committee ensure this catchment and feeders are protected for 2018 and 2019 admissions arrangements as per Section 1.14 of the schools admissions code?

Reply:

The admission policy for Great Yarmouth High was amended by governors – following consultation during Winter 2016. The consultation was displayed on Great Yarmouth High's website. The governors notified NCC and we also displayed the proposed arrangements on NCC's website. The LA was advised that the policy had been determined by 28 February 2017 as required. Great Yarmouth Charter Academy has taken on the arrangements set by the previous school.

- **Question from Paul Smith**

Has the impact of additional traffic to Salisbury road site and cliff park been considered as part of the councils response?

Reply:

As stated before, the County Council is neither the proposer of nor the Decision-Maker for this proposal. Any building works on the Salisbury Road site will require a planning application. The County Council as highways authority is a statutory consultee on planning proposals and its views must be taken into account by the Local Planning Authority.

- **Question from Amie Falconer**

Does the council not agree there should be an option to secondary education provision over the two existing Great Yarmouth/ Southtown sites?

Reply:

The County Council's duty is to provide sufficient school places in its area. This duty is being discharged in Great Yarmouth and will continue to be so if the proposal from the Inspiration Trust goes ahead. It is for the Department for Education and the Education and Skills Funding Agency to decide whether the secondary places provided by the Inspiration Trust and any capital investment are better provided on one site or two.

- **Question from Alison Gould.**

Why can't Trafalgar College be developed as previously envisaged on its site in Southtown as a secular school - 7 hectares so that new building can take place without affecting existing students with Charter Academy operating as a Christian ethos school within its current 900 max pupil numbers with scope for sharing sporting facilities, 6th form places?

Reply:

I refer to previous answers and can only encourage the questioners to refer their comments to the Inspiration Trust as part of the consultation exercise.

6. Local Member Issues/Questions

- **Question 1 from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare**

Regarding the proposed closure of Alderman Swindell School can committee members be provided with a review of the process to date including findings from the recent informal public consultation?

Reply by the Chairman

Review of the process to date:

The DfE guidance on 'Opening and Closing maintained schools', April 2016 sets out the school organisation process.

- Stage 1 is the informal/pre-consultation stage, to consider options for possible re-organisation. This is not the statutory consultation.
- Stage 2 is the publication of the statutory Public Notice and proposal,
- Stage 3 is the formal consultation. It must be a 4 week formal statutory consultation. It is at this stage that the statutory consultation proposal must set out plans for any school closure.
- Stage 4 is the decision, made by the Local Authority Decision-Maker, and should be made within 2 months of the closing date of the Public Notice.
- Stage 5 is the implementation stage.

Stage 1 took place between 12th June – 21st July 2017

Stage 2 took place on 8th September 2017

Stage 3 took place between 8th September – 6th October 2017

We are currently at Stage 4.

Findings from the informal public consultation

The findings from the informal public consultation were published as part of the Public Notice consultation (Stage 3) and have been available on the County Council's website since 8th September;

<https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/north-yarmouth/>

- **Question 2 from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare**

Can committee members be provided with an update regarding the proposed closure of Trafalgar College in Great Yarmouth?

Reply by the Chairman

The Inspiration Trust's consultation process finished on Sunday 15th October and it is for the Trust to determine the next steps.

- **Question 1 from Cllr Mick Castle**

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION IN GREAT YARMOUTH

I welcome Norfolk County Council's declared intent to use the Alderman Swindell school site (once vacated) for a Special School catering for 60 or more pupils with special education needs that cannot be readily met in mainstream schools. This would make a positive difference to local provision and reduce the need for pupils to travel long distances for appropriate schooling. Can the Chairman confirm that such provision would in practice be achieved via an Academy or Free School application (as per the new Wherry School in Norwich) rather than by NCC directly and that the Council will be proactive in working with appropriate educational trusts to procure a successful application?

Reply by Chairman:

Response - I can confirm that the route outlined in the question would be followed to procure a new school to provide for children with special/additional needs.

In developing proposals and preparing for the process of procuring a new school I can assure Councillor Castle that we place much emphasis on early engagement with potential providers.

- **Question 2 from Cllr Mick Castle**

It is recognised that more SEN provision is needed in Great Yarmouth to serve youngsters with special education needs. In January 2016, 297 pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder had been identified across primary/secondary phases in Gt Yarmouth. (Figures provided to Gt Yarmouth Area County Councillors). In global terms 154 of 13,720 primary/secondary pupils had an active Education, Health & Care Plan and 2,494 had some SEN support. How have these figures changed over the last 18 months?

Reply by: Chairman

The overall SEN cohort in Great Yarmouth has increased in line with a trend across the county.

From the January 2017 census return, there were 2962 children in the Great Yarmouth area who had Special educational Needs of whom

- 116 pupils have a Statement of SEN (prior to conversion to the new Education Health & Care Plans
- 151 pupils have an Education Health & Care Plan
- 2695 pupils are at SEN support level

Of this overall SEN cohort there were 278 pupils identified as having Autistic Spectrum disorder.