

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Committee**
held on Monday, 12th July, 2021 at The Ballroom, Sandbach Town Hall, High
Street, Sandbach, CW11 1AX

PRESENT

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)
Councillor C Bulman (Vice-Chair)

Councillors R Bailey, M Beanland, J Buckley, B Burkhill, J Clowes
D Edwardes, S Handley, G Hayes, I Macfarlane, L Smetham and L Smith

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ged Rowney, Interim Director of Children's Services
Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care
Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14 – 19 Skills
Ali Stathers-Tracey, Director of Prevention and Early Help
Deborah Nickson, Legal Team Manager (People) and Deputy Monitoring
Officer
Paul Goodwin, Head of Financial Services & Deputy Chief Finance Officer
Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services and Governance
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Addison, D Marren and J Saunders. Councillors R Bailey, B Burkhill and J Clowes attended as substitutes.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from Councillor R Bailey, who informed the committee that she had a relative serving on the Audlem St James School governing body, and Councillor M Beanland who informed the committee of his role as school business manager at Lacey Green Primary Academy.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

4 SCHOOL ORGANISATION: PROPOSAL FOR THE PROVISION OF A NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL, KINGSLEY FIELDS, NANTWICH

Consideration was given to a report which sought approval to proceed with undertaking the free school presumption process to identify and obtain agreement for a new school sponsor. It was noted that a period of

informal engagement would be undertaken with local ward Members and wider stakeholders at the beginning of the process to help inform the specification of the school. A further period of statutory consultation would be undertaken following the appointment of a sponsor, and another report would be presented to the committee following this.

RESOLVED –

That approval be given:

1. To proceed with the free school presumption process which will include undertaking a consultation, in accordance with the Department for Education guidelines, with the local community, local schools, local councillors, town council and local MP. This is not the formal statutory consultation which sponsors are required to undertake.
2. To proceed with the transfer of the proposed school site into the Council ownership, as detailed in the Section 106 agreement, together with any other agreements associated with or ancillary to the transfer.
3. To progress with the process of attracting potential sponsors to run the new school.

5 SCHOOL ORGANISATION: PROPOSED EXPANSION OF SPRINGFIELD SPECIAL SCHOOL ONTO A SATELLITE SITE

Consideration was given to a report on the proposal to use an existing Cheshire East asset (Dean Row Centre) as a satellite site for the expansion of Springfield School, Crewe.

It was noted that, owing to the cancellation of the full Council meeting scheduled for 21 July, the urgency of this matter may require it to be dealt with under the council's Urgent Decision Procedure.

RESOLVED –

That the committee:

1. Approves the proposed expansion of Springfield School (by way of a satellite site) from 170 pupil places to 250 places (an increase of up to 80 places) from September 2022.
2. Approves the procurement of a contract of works and authorise the Director of Children's Services to award a construction contract to facilitate the provision of additional places at Springfield School (satellite site) together with any other agreements associated with or ancillary to the contract.

3. Recommends that full Council approves a fully funded Supplementary Capital Estimate of £3m to be included as a named scheme within the Children and Families Capital Programme, which is being funded by capital grants.

6 SCHOOL ORGANISATION: ACADEMISATION OF SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to a report on the proposed delegation of current and future conversions, including academy leases, jointly to the Executive Director of Children Services and the Executive Director of Place.

The committee noted an error in paragraph 5.4 of the report and clarity was given that this should refer to two schools rather than three. It was also noted that the spelling of the names of the two schools to convert should be corrected

RESOLVED –

That the committee:

1. Delegates to the Executive Director of Children's Services in consultation with Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer authority to take all steps necessary to agree and execute the commercial transfer agreement, novation of third party contracts, Shared Use Agreements/Facilities Access Agreements, staffing and information transfer.

2. Delegates to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to take all steps necessary to agree and execute any transactions in relation to land, facilities or shared use agreements.

3. Notes that the Chief Finance Officer has authority to take all steps necessary to agree, transfer and adjust relevant budgets and allocate balances in accordance with Department for Education Guidance.

4. Notes that no delegation may be exercised to execute any agreement as per recommendations 2.1 ,2.2 or 2.3 of the report where: a) the school has a deficit of £100k or there is any significant impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy b) there are substantive third party land interests c) any public funds are to be reclaimed under section (land contributions) d) any current or proposed legal claim has been identified e) where an indemnity is sought against Cheshire East Council on any matter.

5. Approves in principle the academy transfer of Bosley Primary School and Audlem Primary School.

7 VARIATION TO LA CO-ORDINATED SCHEME AND ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report on a new School Admissions Code, due to come into force on 1 September 2021 subject to parliamentary approval, and the need to vary the Local Authority Co-ordinated Scheme and Admissions Arrangements 2021-22 and 2022-23 to meet the new requirements and statutory duties around school admissions.

The committee requested that the training sessions aimed at explaining the changes and the steps that schools need to take to comply with the new Code, as referred to in the report, be repeated in the new academic year.

The Chair thanked officers Mark Bayley, Joanne Prophet and Joanne Bowkett for their work.

RESOVLED –

That the Committee approves arrangements to be varied as below:

1. References to School Admissions Code 2014 updated to 2021.
2. Clarification that reference to Previously Cared for Children includes those previously in State Care outside of England and ceased to be in State Care as adopted (e.g. Appendix 2 -paragraph 20.1).
3. Confirmation that Admission Authorities may opt out of the Co-ordinated scheme and this will be published on the Cheshire East website.
4. Changes around addresses that can be used for children of Service Personnel and Crown Servants coming from overseas (e.g. Appendix 2 paragraph 1.7).
5. Approval of Local Authority Co-ordinated Scheme and Admissions Arrangements at Appendix 1 and 2.
6. Approval to adapt the above Local Authority Co-ordinated Scheme and Admissions Arrangements should any additional statutory changes be requested as part of the parliamentary approval.

8 EARLY HELP TOGETHER BOARD QUARTERLY REPORT APRIL 2021

Consideration was given to a report that summarised progress made against the Early Help Together Board Strategic Action Plan. A request was made for an overview of organisations represented on the board to be circulated to the committee.

RESOLVED –

1. That the committee note the progress made against the Early Help Together Board Strategic Action Plan.
2. That an overview of organisations represented on the board be circulated to the committee.

9 SEND REVISIT UPDATE

The committee received a presentation on the Ofsted SEND revisit, the outcome of which noted that the council had made sufficient progress since its previous inspection.

The committee thanked those involved for their hard work and effort to deliver this positive result.

RESOLVED –

That the update be noted.

10 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY CAPITAL GRANTS

Consideration was given to a report on a new policy required to comply with the latest capital grant approval processes, as set out in the Constitution.

RESOLVED –

That the committee approves the policy for the Early Years and Childcare Capital Grant (25 June 2021).

11 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 2021-22

Consideration was given to a report that outlined performance data related to children's services that fell within the responsibility of the committee, from quarter 4 of 2020-21, which included an update on how Covid-19 had impacted performance measures.

RESOLVED –

That the committee:

1. Notes the performance of children's services for quarter 4 of 2020-21.
2. Provides support and challenge in relation to performance for children and young people in Cheshire East.

12 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BUDGETS 2021-22

Consideration was given to a report that outlined the Children and Families budgets for 2021/22. A request was made for further detail to be provided on the plans for adult education.

It was confirmed that budget related training was planned to be arranged for members of the committee.

RESOLVED –

That the committee:

1. Notes the decision of the Finance Sub-Committee to allocate the approved capital and revenue budgets, related policy proposals and earmarked reserves to the Children and Families Committee, as set out in Appendix A.
2. Notes the MTFS timelines, as set out in paragraphs 5.12 – 5.16.
3. Notes the supplementary estimates and virements as set out in Appendix B.

13 APPOINTMENTS TO SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS, PANELS, BOARDS AND JOINT COMMITTEES

Consideration was given to a report on the committee's appointments to the Corporate Parenting Committee, Local Authority School Governor Appointments Sub-Committee and the Cheshire East Health and Wellbeing Board. The names of Members to be appointed to these bodies would be confirmed following the meeting.

It was noted that the report contained an error on the political proportionality of the Corporate Parenting Committee and that the report should instead read as: Con:5; Lab:4; Ind: 3; Lib Dem: 0; R. Ind: 0; NGI:0

It was agreed that the Liberal Democrat Member who previously sat on the Corporate Parenting Committee would remain on the committee as an associate, non-voting member.

It was agreed that a joint working group would be established with the Adults and Health Committee which would comprise three members of each committee on an ad hoc, voluntary basis to consider reports and matters that crossed the remits and responsibilities of both committees.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Children and Families Committee appoints members to the Corporate Parenting Committee as follows: Con:5; Lab:4; Ind:3; Lib Dem:0; R. Ind:0; NGI:0
2. That the Children and Families Committee appoints the Local Authority School Governor Appointments Sub-Committee with a membership of 5; the proportionalities being as follows: Con:2; Lab:2; Ind:1; Lib Dem:0; R. Ind:0; NGI:0
3. That the Children and Families Committee nominates one member to the Cheshire East Health and Wellbeing Board

14 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the committee's work programme.

RESOLVED –

That work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 5.45 pm

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)