

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Committee**
held on Thursday, 24th March, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

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

Councillors L Anderson, M Beanland, J Buckley, S Handley, I Macfarlane,
J Saunders, L Smetham, L Smith, J Clowes, L Wardlaw and B Burkhill

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14-19 Skills
Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care (virtually via Microsoft Teams)
Claire Williamson, Interim Director of Early Help and Prevention
Deborah Nickson, Legal Team Manager (People) and Deputy Monitoring
Officer
Joanne Wilcox, Head of Financial Management
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer
Helen Charlesworth-May, Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration
Dave Leadbetter, Head of Children's Commissioning
Jill Stenton, Senior Commissioning Manager

66 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Addison, Councillor
Edwardes and Councillor Hayes. Councillor Burkhill, Councillor Clowes and
Councillor Wardlaw attended as substitutes.

67 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

68 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2022 be approved as a
correct record.

69 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

70 COVID-19 SCHOOLS UPDATE (VERBAL)

The Director of Education and 14-19 Skills provided a verbal update on the Covid-19 position in schools. The rate of infection in the borough had recently increased, including in school age children. The majority of pupils were reported to be asymptomatic or experiencing mild illness. Pressures were more significant on staffing and the Council had provided support to ensure schools remained open. It was noted that fewer tests were being carried out now so there could not be a direct comparison with previous data. Testing was expected to reduce further after Easter with the government ending the offer of free testing and infection levels in schools would be monitored largely through absences. The issues of staffing and testing had been escalated to the Department for Education. The Education Recovery Group continued to meet regularly with schools.

A query was raised as to the progress of the vaccination programme in children and it was agreed that a written response would be provided with the data on this.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

71 ALL AGE CARERS STRATEGY 2021-2025

The committee received the report which sought approval to publish the All Age Carers Strategy 2021-2025.

It was agreed that a report would be brought back to committee at a later date to monitor how the objectives are being met.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Note the details of the consultation and engagement completed for the All-Age Carers Strategy and All-Age Carers Hub.
2. Approve the publication of the All-Age Carers Strategy for 2021-2025 (Appendix 1).
3. Note the service model for the All-Age Carers Hub prior to recommissioning activity (Appendix 2).

72 CHILDREN'S CARE AT HOME RECOMMISSION

The committee received the report which outlined the redesign and recommission of a new Children's Care at Home purchasing system which aimed to be operational from November 2022.

It was agreed that a report would be brought back to committee to provide an update six months after the system had been in place.

RESOLVED (by majority):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Approve the redesign and recommission of a new Children's Care at Home purchasing system.
2. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to award contracts to providers to enter the Children's Care at Home purchasing system.

73 SELF-EVALUATION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The committee received the report which set out the current self-evaluation for children's services.

It was agreed that a report would be brought to committee with a detailed update on the Educational Psychologist service.

A concern was raised about permanence and internal fostering and it was noted that a full report on this matter went to the Corporate Parenting Committee on 15 March 2022. This would be circulated to the committee for information.

A query was raised regarding the number of children living in residential care during 2020-2021. It was agreed that the Director of Children's Social Care would look into this data and provide a written response on the correct figure.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

74 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3 2021-2022

The committee received the report which provided an overview of performance across Children and Families services for quarter 3 of 2021-22.

A query was raised regarding the cost of living crisis and what support can be provided to children and schools who rely on energy for medical equipment. It was agreed that consideration would be given to this and feedback would be provided to the committee.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

75 COUNCILLOR FRONTLINE VISITS ANNUAL REPORT

The committee received the report which provided an update on the themes and issues raised through councillor frontline visits to the Cheshire East Consultation Service, Child in Need and Child Protection Teams and the Children with Disabilities Social Work Team and Short Breaks Team over the last 12 months.

It was agreed that consideration would be given to encouraging wider engagement in the visits from Members across the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

76 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the committee's work programme.

The following requests were made for additions to the work programme:

- A report reviewing the school transport changes to be brought to committee in six months
- A report on the Best4Business programme to be brought to committee with an aim of the May committee meeting
- A report on the Educational Psychologist service
- A review of the Children's Care at Home Recommission to be brought to committee six months after the framework commences in November 2022 (May 2023)
- A verbal presentation on the Ukrainian refugee position in Cheshire East to be brought to committee in May

It was noted that a Transformation Board was in the process of being established and that this would report to committee on a regular basis. This would include updates on contracts which had been awarded through delegated authority to officers. A query was raised as to whether there will be Member representation on this board and it was agreed that a response would be provided.

77 MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee be noted.

The meeting commenced at 14.00 and concluded at 16.30

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)