

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Committee**  
held on Monday, 13th February, 2023 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 Smith, R Bailey, D Edwardes, L Wardlaw and S Holland

## OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services  
Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14-19 Skills  
Claire Williamson, Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration  
Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care  
Deborah Nickson, Legal Team Manager (People)  
Steve Reading, Principal Accountant  
Nicola Wood-Hill, Accountant  
Janet Witkowski, Head of Legal Services  
Dave Leadbetter, Head of Children's Commissioning  
Lesley Seal, Senior Communications Officer  
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

## ALSO PRESENT

Rob Carter, Deputy Chief Executive of OnSide Youth Zones

## 75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Addison, Cllr Gregory, Cllr Hayes and Cllr Smetham. Cllr Holland, Cllr Edwardes, Cllr Wardlaw and Cllr Bailey attended as substitutes.

## 76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In the interest of openness, Cllr Bailey declared in relation to item 7 Schools Funding Formula and Early Years Funding Formula 2023/24 that a relative of hers serves on a local Multi Academy Trust. Cllr Bailey had also received correspondence on the matter from a local school but had not pre-determined the outcome of the decision to be taken at the committee's meeting.

## 77 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was requested that the minutes of the previous meeting be amended to state that the police had been invited to attend the meeting for the Joint Targeted Area Inspection report but had sent apologies.

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

**78 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION**

There were no public speakers.

**79 UPDATE REPORT ON THE 2021/2022 ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS THE ILACS RECOMMENDATIONS**

The committee received the report which provided an update on progress on the recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in November 2019.

It was noted that there was a typographical error in section 6.3 of the report and that the correct date was July 2023.

Concerns were raised about staffing levels, caseloads and cuts to Early Help. Officers advised committee that while social worker vacancies were still being carried, it was an improving picture and average caseloads had continued to reduce since September. Assurances were given that cuts in Early Help were about remodelling, upskilling, and looking at where existing skills are and that there was a focus on ensuring recruitment and retainment.

The committee thanked officers for the transparency of the report.

**RESOLVED (by majority):**

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Receive the update on the progress to date against the recommendations, and the impact for children and young people, recognising the areas for continued development as well as progress made.
2. Approve the proposal to undertake a review and refresh of the ILAC improvement plan. The decision to replace the existing plan with a broader more ambitious plan reflecting the improvement journey to date, the impact and learning achieved from the and the collective thinking of the senior leadership team, with support from the DfE improvement advisor.
3. Agree that the plan be presented to the committee in July 2023 in order to provide an opportunity for scrutiny against outcomes for children and young people and reviewed at 6 monthly intervals.

## 80 CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE NAME CHANGE

The committee received the report which recommended a name change for the Corporate Parenting Committee to reflect the wishes of cared for children and care leavers who had asked for professionals to simplify the language that is used when working with them or making decisions about them.

It was noted that the term 'Corporate Parent' was a statutory term that would remain so would still be referred to in some contexts but that officers would work with the young people to ensure they understood this.

### **RESOLVED (unanimously):**

That the Children and Families Committee endorse the recommendation from the Corporate Parenting Committee that the name of the Corporate Parenting Committee is changed to the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee in response to feedback from care experienced children and young people.

## 81 SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA AND EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA 2023/24

The committee received the report on the Schools Funding Formula and Early Years Funding Formula 2023/24.

The Director of Education offered to hold a briefing to go through the formula in further detail for information if required. The committee agreed that this would be beneficial.

A query was raised as to whether more information had been provided in previous reports. Officers advised that there was no intention to provide less detail than previously but that this would be checked following the meeting to ensure there was no difference in the level of detail being provided.

A concern was raised that representation on the Schools Forum may not be robust enough as this matter had been approved unanimously although there had been some challenge from some schools. The Director of Education advised that in addition to the Schools Forum, all schools were invited to respond to the consultation and were invited to a briefing but that not all schools took that offer up; however it would be fed back to the representatives on the Schools Forum that there had been some challenge.

### **RESOLVED (by majority):**

#### Schools Block

That the committee approves the following for the adoption of the Schools Funding Formula 2023/24:

1. The use of a local funding formula that uses the Department for Education (DfE) national funding formula factors, uplifted for the Cheshire East area cost adjustment, and with any additional funding being allocated via the basic entitlement factor. The formula factors are set out at Appendix 2.

2. The use of +0.5% as the minimum funding guarantee percentage.
3. The creation of a local Growth Fund at a value of £0.8m.
4. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the schools block grant and the mainstream schools additional grant in accordance with relevant guidance.

#### Early Years Block

That the committee approves the following for the adoption of the Early Years Funding Formula for 2023/24:

5. The continued use of the current funding formula and an increase in the hourly rates by the same percentage increase as the increased funding from the DfE.
6. The new funding rates. The rates for 2022/23 and the proposed rates for 2023/24 are set out at Appendix 4.
7. Approves funding to support children learning English as an additional language with effect from 1 April 2023. Westminster Nursery School, Crewe, would currently qualify for this funding.
8. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the early years grant in accordance with relevant guidance.
9. That the committee delegates authority to the Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration to enter into revised contracts with providers in accordance with the DfE funding increase.

#### High Needs Block

10. That the committee approves the provisional budget allocations of the high needs block and additional high needs funding as set out in Appendix 5.
11. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the high needs block and additional high needs funding in accordance with relevant guidance.

#### Central Schools Services Block

12. That the committee approves the provisional budget allocations and use of the Central Schools Services Block as per Appendix 6.
13. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the Central Schools Services grant in accordance with relevant guidance.

**82 SCHOOL ORGANISATION: ACADEMISATION OF SCHOOLS: FORWARD PLAN**

The committee received the report which informed of planned schools across the borough which were seeking to move to academy status and join a multi academy trust.

**RESOLVED:**

That the committee receives and notes the summary table (Appendix 1) showing the status of academy conversions across Cheshire East schools.

**83 WORK PROGRAMME**

The committee considered the work programme.

It was noted that the March agenda was heavy but was being reviewed and some reports may be deferred.

**RESOLVED:**

That the work programme be noted.

**84 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item in pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and the public interest would not be served in publishing this information.

**85 SCHOOL ORGANISATION: SELECTION OF A SPONSOR FOR KINGSLEY FIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL, NANTWICH**

The committee received the report which provided an update to the previous committee paper, considered by the Children and Families Committee on 10 January 2022, on the selection process for a sponsor for the new primary school at Kingsley Fields.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Notes the progress of the free school presumption process in the identification of the preferred sponsor trust following formal applications and interviews and notes that the final decision is determined by the DfE Regional Director in association with the Secretary of State.

2. Notes that the School Organisation team, working alongside the DfE representatives has adhered to the Free School Presumption Departmental advice (DfE November 2019) and that, following the necessary process, has put forward the local authority's preferred sponsor to run the new primary school at Kingsley Fields, Nantwich.

## 86 CREWE YOUTH ZONE

The committee received the report which provided an update on the progress of the Crewe Youth Zone project and the capital funding required to fully fund the development of the Crewe Youth Zone.

The committee requested to receive regular updates, including decisions made by other committees.

### **RESOLVED (by majority):**

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Approve the development of a Crewe Youth Zone in accordance with the final business plan.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance and Compliance to enter into all necessary agreements to allow the project to be brought forward.
3. Delegate authority for any other decisions related to the delivery of the Crewe Youth Zone project to the Executive Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Executive Director – Place.
4. Note that a separate report will be presented to Economy & Growth Committee, as necessary, to obtain formal approval to dispose of any areas of public open space within the development site following the public consultation exercise.
5. Note that a separate report will be presented to Highways and Transport Committee, as necessary, to obtain formal approval to remove Oak Street Car Park from the Consolidation Order 2015, following the public consultation exercise.
6. Note that further actions will be taken under existing Officer delegations to facilitate and support the project namely to:
  - Subject to the successful completion of the process set out in 3.1.4 and 3.1.5, enter into an Agreement for Lease and Lease with Crewe Youth Zone Charity to make available Council land for 125 years at a peppercorn rent in order to develop a Crewe Youth Zone.
  - Support OnSide with any actions to gain full Planning consent

- Instigate the statutory process for a variation order to Oak Street Car Park
- As land owner to instigate the statutory process for the disposal of public open space with the public consultation exercise
- As a land owner take all actions required to assist Onside to take forward the Stopping Up Order required for Cross Street (road that runs through Oak Street Car Park).

The meeting commenced at 14:00 and concluded at 16:43

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)