

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Committee**
held on Monday, 13th November, 2023 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor C Bulman (Chair)
Councillor L Anderson (Vice-Chair)

Councillors R Bailey, M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, D Clark, E Gilman,
R Kain, B Posnett, J Saunders, G Smith, L Smith and L Wardlaw

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Claire Williamson, Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration
Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care
Janet Witkowski, Head of Legal Services
Annie Britton, Participation Lead, Youth Support Service
Joanne Prophet, School Organisation and Capital Manager
Dr Susie Roberts, Consultant in Public Health
Katherine Oldacre, Head of Service: Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Samantha Derbyshire, Head of Service: Children's Provision
Joe Carter, Project Manager
Mark Hughes, Senior Commissioning Manager
Keith Evans, Head of Service: Mental Health and Learning Disabilities
Nikki Wood-Hill, Lead Finance Partner
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Steve Docking, CEO North West Academies Trust
Maddy Lowry, Associate Director, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS
Foundation Trust
Cheshire East Youth Council Members

40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr George Hayes. Cllr Liz Wardlaw
attended as a substitute.

41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

42 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

43 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Mr Steve Docking, CEO of North West Academies Trust, addressed the committee regarding items 6 (Kingsbourne Academy, Nantwich – 12 month delay for the opening of the new school) and 7 (Academisation of Millfields Primary School and Nursery). Mr Docking thanked officers for the work done so far in relation to both schools.

44 PRESENTATION FROM CHESHIRE EAST YOUTH COUNCIL

The committee received a presentation from members of the Cheshire East Youth Council to mark Children's Rights Month.

The presentation highlighted some current issues and concerns affecting young people. These included:

- The cost of living
- Mental health and wellbeing
- The school curriculum and PHSE
- Vaping and substance misuse

The committee asked questions of the Youth Council and gave assurances that their views were heard. Members were keen to ensure that there was a mechanism for their views to be represented and communicated further. The Executive Director of Children's Services advised that she chaired the Children's Trust Board which provided a process for young people to feed into the Council and had made a commitment to work through the issues raised in that forum and bring back updates to the board on a regular basis.

45 KINGSBOURNE ACADEMY, NANTWICH – 12-MONTH DELAY FOR THE OPENING OF THE NEW SCHOOL

The committee received the report which provided an update on the delay to providing the new 1FE (210 places) primary free school, on the Kingsley Fields Development, Nantwich.

The committee requested that a further report be brought back in a few months to keep members updated on the delay. Officers agreed that a report would be brought to the February committee meeting.

The ward member, Cllr Posnett, requested to be kept informed throughout the process.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee note the 12-month delay for the opening of the new school Kingsbourne Academy, Nantwich.

46 ACADEMISATION OF MILLFIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY, MARSH LANE, NANTWICH

The committee received the report which set out the arrangements in place to support the intended academy conversion of Millfields Primary School and Nursery to become part of the North West Academies Trust Limited.

Officers advised that there was a minor typographical error in the name of the school on the draft transfer agreement at appendix 2 and that this would be corrected.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Authorise the Executive Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer to take all steps necessary to agree and execute the Commercial Transfer Agreement (Appendix 2) to the North West Academies Trust Limited relating to the transfer of all staff under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, and assets
2. Authorise the Executive Director of Place and Chief Finance Officer to take the steps necessary to agree the required transactions in relation to land, facilities or shared use agreements as are necessary in order to facilitate the conversion, including (but not limited to) the grant and completion of a lease (see Appendix 3) to the North West Academies Trust Limited for 125 years substantially in the form of the model lease produced by DfE at a peppercorn rent. The school site is identifiable as shown on the accompanying redline lease plan (see Appendix 4)

47 CHESHIRE EAST PLACE - LEARNING DISABILITY AND MENTAL HEALTH PLANS

The committee received the report which sought approval of the Cheshire East Place Plans for Learning Disabilities and Mental Health.

A query was raised regarding a breakdown of the mental health conditions in each ward for members to understand where support could be provided in the community. The committee were advised that information based on referrals into secondary care could be shared with committee but officers did not have information from primary care data.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Approve the Cheshire East Place Learning Disabilities Plan
2. Approve the Cheshire East Place Mental Health Plan

48 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2024/25 - 2027/28

The committee received the report which set out the indicative financial envelope for this committee to support consultation on the development of the Cheshire East Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28.

There was a typographical error in paragraph one of the report which stated that members were being asked to approve the indicative financial envelope. It was confirmed that this was for noting only and no decision was required at this stage.

Some members expressed a concern that there was not enough detail provided in the report. Officers advised that the intention was for members to note the envelope that had been allocated to the committee and that, as the MTFS was developed, more detail would be brought back. Members' concerns would be fed back to the Finance team.

A query was raised as to whether there would be MTFS workshops for the committee and officers undertook to confirm this following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Note the indicative budget envelope for this committee, as approved at the Finance Sub-Committee on 2 November, as a way of setting financial targets in support of achieving a balanced budget for 2024/25
2. Note that officers will develop further proposals in consultation with Members to enable wider stakeholder consultation prior to approval by Council
3. Note that Committees will be presented with the opportunity to further review financial proposals, designed to achieve a balanced budget, as part of their January cycle of meetings prior to recommendations being made to Council for approval

49 SECOND FINANCIAL REVIEW 2023/24

The committee received the report which provided the second review of the Cheshire East Council forecast outturn for the financial year 2023/24.

In relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant, members suggested considering a spotlight review, LGA peer review or having conversations with local authorities which were holding a surplus to consider best practice. Officers advised that there was a significant amount of scrutiny from the Safety Valve programme which Cheshire East had entered into, and that they were happy to work with other authorities on best practice. It was noted that there were some areas of best practice at Cheshire East.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Consider the report of the Finance Sub Committee: Finance Sub-Committee, 2nd November, 2023
2. Consider the factors leading to a forecast adverse Net Revenue financial pressure of £10.8m against a revised budget of £80.3m (13.4%)
3. Consider the forecast and further mitigations needing to be identified, aimed at bringing spending back in line with budget
4. Consider the in-year forecast Capital Spending of £36.5m against an approved MTFS budget of £53.8m, due to slippage that has been re-profiled into future years
5. Scrutinise the contents of Annex 1 and Appendix 2 and note that any financial mitigation decisions requiring approval will be made in line with relevant delegations

50 CHESHIRE EAST SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The committee received the report on the activity of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership in 2022/2023.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Scrutinise the work of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership from 2023/2023
2. Scrutinise the future plan of work for the partnership to ensure that the right actions are in place to deliver high quality support to children and young people

51 CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The committee received the report on Cheshire East's improvement and impact plan, following the Ofsted inspections of local authority children's services (ILACS), which addressed previous inspection findings, and the findings from the self-evaluation of the impact of early help and social care practice on outcomes for children and young people.

The committee were advised that this was a new plan and that officers would be able to bring updates on progress going forward.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Note that Cheshire East Council is expecting to receive a standard inspection of local authority children's services
2. Scrutinise the early help and children's social care improvement and impact plan to ensure that the right actions are in place to deliver high quality support to children and young people
3. Scrutinise the findings from the self-evaluation of early help and social care practice

52 MENTAL HEALTH SPOTLIGHT REVIEW: WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT, PROMOTE, PREVENT, EMPOWER AND INTERVENE EARLY FOR ALL INVOLVED

The committee received the report on emotional and mental wellbeing need seen in children and young people across Cheshire East, and the support currently available to support this need.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Note and endorse the findings and recommendations of the latest spotlight review
2. Continue to champion mental health and wellbeing as a priority across all agendas

53 UNREGULATED AND UNREGISTERED PROVISION PROTOCOL

The committee received the report which outlined the challenges locally and nationally in relation to the use of unregulated and unregistered provision for cared for children.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Consider the challenges leading to the use of unregulated and unregistered placements, the extent of the use of these placements in Cheshire East, and the implications for children and young people in these placements
2. Scrutinise the protocol to ensure it effectively safeguards children in these arrangements and that there is appropriate oversight from the Executive Director of Children's Services

54 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered the work programme.

As there was an additional meeting scheduled for December, officers would give consideration to bringing forward some reports from the January meeting to balance the two agendas. A request was made for this to include the 'Basford East New Primary School Postponement to Scheme' report.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 14.00 and concluded at 17.45

Councillor C Bulman (Chair)