

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Committee**  
held on Monday, 20th March, 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 M Addison, L Anderson, J Buckley, S Handley, G Hayes,  
J Saunders, L Smetham, L Smith and D Edwardes

## 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  
Samantha Walker, Head of Children's Provider Services  
Victoria Whiting, Business Development Manager  
Alex Cooper, Project Manager - Education  
Alexandria Brightmore, Principal Educational Psychologist  
Mark Bayley, Head of Service - School Infrastructure & Outcomes  
Joanne Prophet, Team Manager – School Organisation and Capital  
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

## 87 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Beanland, Cllr Gregory and Cllr Macfarlane. Cllr Edwardes attended as a substitute.

## 88 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 89 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

### RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

## 90 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

## 91 CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

The committee received the report which outlined the Council's current pressures relating to placements for cared for children and sought approval on recommendations relating to the development of Council-run provision in order to improve young people's outcomes, alongside increasing placement options, capacity to meet current and future demand and provide better value for money.

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

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Approve the planned transition of 2 (independent and Ofsted registered) children's homes currently commissioned in Crewe and Macclesfield to become Cheshire East Council-run provision during 2023, following a recent decision of mutual termination with the commissioned organisation.
2. Approve the development of one further 3 bed (2 medium term beds + 1 emergency bed) council-run children's home in the first instance, for development and go-live by the end of February 2024.
3. Note the intention to develop at least one further council-run children's home (in line with the No Wrong Door framework if possible-see background documents), by the end of the 2025 calendar year, pending successful implementation of 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 and positive proof of concept.

## 92 DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION DELIVERING BETTER VALUE PROGRAMME

The committee received the report which provided an update on the Department for Education Delivering Better Value programme which Cheshire East Council joined in July 2022.

A request was made for the committee to receive detail on the implementation of the programme. Officers advised that behind both work streams there were detailed implementation plans which were currently being worked on in more detail and this would be shared as the programme moves forward.

A further request was made for the committee to receive updates on the financial implications of what was being achieved and what the challenges may be going forward. The Director of Education advised that the committee would receive this and that officers were currently looking at how best to measure this and share with committee.

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

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Note that Cheshire East have been awarded £1 Million in the form of a grant - approved by DfE on 13 February 2023.

2. Note the profiled spend of the grant over a two-year period 2023-2024 and 2024-2025.
3. Note the workstreams identified during the DBV programme and the intended use of the grant as set out within the report.
4. Note that the next update to the DSG management plan will include DBV findings and opportunities and will be based on up-to-date SEN data and intelligence. This will be presented to the Children & Families Committee in September 2023.
5. Note that the Chief Executive, Executive Director of Children's Services and the Section 151 Officer will raise the financial issues with the DfE and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
6. Delegate to the Executive Director of Children's Services authority to undertake any consultations deemed necessary to facilitate implementation.

### **93 HIGH NEEDS FUNDING POST-PILOT UPDATE**

The committee received the report which provided an update on the results of the recent pilot undertaken in relation to a potential change in model for the allocation of top-up funding associated with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan as well as recommendations on next steps for this work.

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

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Note the Results and Analysis Report for pilot phase 2b, and that results from pilot phase 2b can be shared with wider stakeholders at this stage (including parents/carers of children and young people with SEND).
2. Approve the High Needs Funding Working Group's (HNFWG) recommendation to not display the band on EHC Plans.
3. Consider and scrutinise the proposed new banding model for funding EHC Plans as developed by the High Needs Funding Working Group and supported by the Schools' Forum.
4. Consider and scrutinise the proposed staged implementation of the new banding model.
5. Approve plans to carry out a further open consultation on proposed changes to the High Needs Funding Model used in Cheshire East.
6. Note that the results of the consultation will be brought back to Committee.

## 94 EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE PROGRESS UPDATE

The committee received the report which provided an update on the Educational Psychology Service.

A request was made for data to be analysed in relation to schools which were not taking up the traded offer to understand the reasons for this and to ensure that pupils were not being disadvantaged. The Director of Education advised that a lot of work was currently going on around this as well as other training offered to schools.

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

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Note the development and achievements of the Educational Psychology Service.
2. Support the continued recruitment and retention programme and plans to develop a stable and sustainable Educational Psychology Service in line with demand and budget which can:
  - Fulfil all statutory related duties.
  - Provide an adequate and balanced range of evidence-informed prevention and intervention work through an educational psychology traded service.

*The committee adjourned for a short break. Cllr Addison left the meeting and did not return.*

## 95 UPDATE ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF TRAVEL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The committee received the report which set out the progress to date on the transformation of travel support for children and young people.

It was noted that there was an error in the recommendations of the report and that the second and third bullet points under section 3.1 b (the revised payments in relation to cash grants/personal budgets for the 2023-24 academic year, and the proposed changes to the existing school transport policies in line with the Edge review recommendations, including the review of transport charges, the post-16, spare seat and Poynton High School scheme) should come under section 3.1 c.

It was also noted that the report stated that the consultation would be on 22 March 2023 and end on 17 May 2023, however this would be delayed due to the purdah period.

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

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Note the progress to date on implementation of the transformation programme, including the imminent appointment of specialist professional capacity, funded from the school transport budget.
2. Consider and approve the proposed arrangements in relation to the post-16 home-to-school transport policy statement for 2023-24.
3. Approve the proposals to go out to consultation and the results of the consultation will be brought back to committee, including:
  - the revised payments in relation to cash grants/personal budgets for the 2023-24 academic year.
  - the proposed changes to the existing school transport policies in line with the Edge review recommendations, including the review of transport charges (the post-16, spare seat and Poynton High School scheme).
4. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children and Families, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place, to make decisions in relation to progressing the milestone and activity at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively, with any specific actions requiring a decision by committee to be subject of a further report.

*Cllr Hayes left the meeting and did not return.*

## **96 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 4 & 5 (HSF4/HSF5) GRANT DELIVERY**

The committee received the report which provided an update on the Household Support Fund 4/5 grant awarded to Cheshire East and sought delegated approval to deliver the fund in line with the proposals set out in the report.

It was suggested that it would be helpful for Members to have details of where to signpost residents to and for the webpage where the public facing form had been to also signpost residents to where they can go for support. Officers noted these suggestions and advised that a clear communications strategy would be shared with the committee.

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

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Notes Cheshire East's HSF4/5 grant allocation of £4.4m in 2023/24.
2. Agrees the proposed allocation of the grant, eligible cohorts and payment arrangements set out in this paper.
3. Agrees the closure of the public facing enquiry form and return to the professional/practitioner only enquiry form. This is a result of an excessive volume of claims received and validity of claim challenges.

4. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Childrens services to incur expenditure in line with the HSF4/5 grant conditions.

## 97 **2022/23 FINANCIAL UPDATE**

The committee received the report which set out the financial update for the year 2022/23.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Notes the report of the Finance Sub-Committee ([Agenda for Finance Sub-Committee on Wednesday, 8th March, 2023, 2.00 pm | Cheshire East Council](#)), specifically the recommendations of that committee.

1.1 Finance Sub-Committee recommend Service Committees to:

- 1.1.1. note the financial update and forecast outturn relevant to their terms of reference.
- 1.1.2. note the delegated decisions relating to supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in Appendix 2, Section 2, Table 3.

- 1.2. Notes Appendix 2 and the following sections specific to this Committee:

- Changes to Revenue budget 2022/23
- Corporate Grants Register
- Debt Management
- Capital Strategy
- Reserve Strategy

## 98 **SCHOOL ORGANISATION : OVERVIEW OF PLANNED CAPITAL SCHEMES INCLUDING FUNDING REVISIONS**

The committee received the report which provided an overview of the school capital programme for both current and projected schemes and those which had been completed over the recent five-year period.

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

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Receive the strategic overview of capital planned programmes, as outlined in appendix 1, and to note the progression of these schemes over time to meet our statutory duties of sufficiency of school places.

2. Note that the size and complexity of the school estate necessitates regular and timely decision making, and that all such decisions will continue to be captured and reported to the Committee. Noting also that the constitution establishes the necessary authority for such decisions, and that this may require the Committee to note decisions made under delegated powers or approve delegate decisions or note decisions that may require Council approval.
3. Note the required budgetary changes in appendix 3 and to approve a further capital virement of £1.13M from the uncommitted grant funding to the Springfield School, Crewe campus capital scheme thereby increasing the scheme budget to £7.13M.
4. Note the information in appendix 4 which shows the revised funding allocation for the new primary school at Kingsley Fields, Nantwich capital scheme which has increased to £7.78m.
5. Approve the virement of £500,000 from the uncommitted grant funding which supports the two new SEN Free Schools in managing potential site abnormality costs (total £1.0 Million).
6. Note Council's approval, as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) of the School Condition Funding grant of £2.868m, noting also that the Executive Director of Childrens Services will regularly report on decisions taken or required on the spending of this and other schools' capital projects as the programme of works is finalised.

**99 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 (unanimously):**

That the committee approves to receive a 6 monthly update on academy conversions rather than a separate report each committee meeting.

**100 WORK PROGRAMME**

The committee considered the work programme.

**RESOLVED:**

That the work programme be noted.

**101 MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the following sub-committee meetings be noted:

Local Authority School Governor Nomination Sub Committee – 5 October 2022

Corporate Parenting Committee – 1 November 2022

Corporate Parenting Committee – 10 January 2023

The meeting commenced at 14:00 and concluded at 17:00

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)