

# **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Committee**  
held on Monday, 12th February, 2024 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 J Clowes

## **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services  
Claire Williamson, Director of Education, Strong Start and Integration  
Samantha Derbyshire, Head of Children's Provision  
Gill Betton, Head of Children's Development and Partnerships  
Richard Dawson, Edge Consultant  
Martyn Baggley, Head of Integrated Commissioning  
Joe Carter, Project Manager  
Jennie Summers, Legal Team Manager  
Nikki Wood-Hill, Lead Finance Partner  
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

## **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

Cllr K Edwards  
Cllr G Marshall

## **71 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Hayes. Cllr Clowes attended as a substitute.

## **72 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In relation to item 7 (Future Options for the School Catering Service), Cllr Bailey declared that she was a local food producer.

## **73 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

## 74 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

## 75 SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA AND EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA 2024/25

The committee received the report on the Schools Funding Formula and Early Years Funding Formula for 2024/25.

There was a concern that there had been a low turnout at the meeting of the Schools Forum, during which the recommendations to committee had been voted on. Some members felt that this was therefore not representative of all views and difficult to ensure the decision made was fair to all schools. Officers gave assurances that there had been no administrative issues behind the low turnout. Non-attendance was now being monitored and membership would be reviewed as needed going forward.

It was noted that there was an error in the table on page 22 of the agenda pack and that the percentage change shown should be 5%, rather than 0.5%.

### **RESOLVED:**

#### **Schools Block (by majority):**

That the Children and Families committee approve the following for the adoption of the Schools Funding Formula 2024/25:

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% as the minimum funding guarantee percentage
3. Setting a local Growth Fund at a value of £1.000m
4. Block transfer of 0.5% (£1.428m) from the schools block to the high needs block. This is dependent on approval of the disapplication by the DfE
5. In the event that the disapplication for the block transfer is not approved by the DfE that the following formula be used: i) The use of 0% as the minimum funding guarantee percentage. ii) Setting a local Growth Fund at a value of £1.493m. iii) No block transfer between the schools block and high needs block

6. 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
7. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to make disapplications to the DfE should it be required in the future

**Early Years Block (by majority):**

8. The continued use of the current funding formula that passes 95% of the funding allocation to providers of the early education entitlements and increase the hourly rates by the same percentage increase as the increased funding from the DfE
9. Pay all providers of the early education entitlements for 2 year olds and under universal base rates based on 95% of the DfE allocated rate
10. The new funding rates. The rates for 2023/24 and the proposed rates for 2024/25 are set out at Appendix 4
11. Remove English as an additional language (EAL) as a specific element of the formula and revert to funding EAL via the universal base rate
12. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the early years grant in accordance with relevant guidance
13. That the committee delegates authority to the Director of Education, Strong Start and Integration to enter into revised contracts with providers in accordance with the DfE funding increase

**High Needs Block (by majority)**

14. That the committee approves the provisional budget allocations of the high needs block and additional high needs funding as set out in Appendix 5
15. 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 (by majority):**

16. That the committee approves the provisional budget allocations and use of the central schools services block as per Appendix 6

17. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the Central Schools Services grant in accordance with relevant guidance

## **76 PAEDIATRIC SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION THERAPY SUPPORT**

The committee received the report which outlined the Council and Integrated Care Board's approach and the current service pressures for paediatric speech, language, and communication therapy (SLCN) services, and the initial stages taken to review the service.

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

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Approve a co-produced service redesign following from a service review, and engagement process for paediatric speech, language and communication
2. Approve the review of a jointly commissioned service (Section 256/75 Agreement) between the council and the Integrated Care Board for the provision of for paediatric speech, language and communication, as the first stage in a wider programme of jointly coordinated activity to meet the eligible needs of children with SEND, including broader paediatric therapeutic support

## **77 FUTURE OPTIONS FOR THE SCHOOL CATERING SERVICE**

The committee received the report which set out the findings in relation to the options, risks and issues for the future delivery of the catering service to remove the current subsidy from the Council. The report sought a decision from members on the future delivery of this service.

Some members were concerned that they did not have enough information at this stage to support the recommended option, as set out in the report, to cease Cheshire East's catering service and that they would need to hear the views of the schools before making a decision. Officers gave assurances that there had been ongoing discussions with schools since July 2023 and extensive work had been undertaken before presenting the recommendations to committee. A view was expressed that a decision could not be made based on the current information available to members and that there should be further consultation with schools and partners, with this being fed back to committee at the earliest opportunity.

An amendment was moved and seconded which sought to vote only on recommendation b) as set out in the report (*to approve the proposal to enter into discussions with those schools who buy into the service to*

*cease the provision by the end of December 2024, if possible)* and remove recommendations a), c), and d). This was carried by majority.

**RESOLVED (by majority):**

That the Children and Families Committee approve the proposal to enter into discussions with those schools who buy into the service to cease the provision by the end of December 2024, if possible.

**78 CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The committee considered the report which provided an overview of progress to date against the plans to transform travel support for children and young people. It also provided a review of existing areas of discretionary transport and sought approval from the committee on proposed changes to the school transport policies.

A query was raised as to when there would be a timetable or update on available walking routes. Officers advised that there had been a significant amount of work undertaken and that a report was scheduled to come to committee in April.

A suggestion was raised for consultation and discussion to take place with town and parish councils.

**RESOLVED (by majority):**

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Scrutinise the progress to date in relation to the transformation of travel support for children and young people
2. Consider and approve the proposed changes to the school transport policies and procedures set out below at paragraphs 9 to 32, including:
  - a) the move to a consistent online approach to the application and review of school transport eligibility for all children and young people
  - b) the policy changes for post-16 students to make the offer of a personal travel budget (PTB) the default method of travel support
  - c) changes to the spare seats, charging and collecting payments for school transport, including the increase in charges for both post-16 parental contribution (where PTB cannot be offered) and spare seat provision to £900 per annum from September 2024 to be collected mainly by direct debit

- d) amendments to the policy to reflect updated statutory guidance from the Department for Education

#### **79 SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2024-2027**

The committee received the report which set out the Sufficiency Strategy for children's social care.

The strategy provided background on some of the approaches being taken to implement demand management strategy and deliver against the medium-term financial strategy.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Children and Families Committee note the 2024-2027 Sufficiency Strategy in the context of the medium term financial strategy and the cared for children and care leavers strategy 2023.

#### **80 LOCAL AUTHORITY COSTS AND TIMESCALES IN SUPPORT OF A SCHOOL CONVERTING TO AN ACADEMY**

The committee received the report which provided a briefing of a communication that was shared with Cheshire East schools on 22 January 2024 regarding the timescales and costs in relation to Cheshire East Council's involvement in the academy conversion of a school.

#### **RESOLVED:**

The Children and Families Committee note the information shared with schools (Appendix 1).

#### **81 ACADEMISATION 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 Children and Families Committee note the forward plan in Appendix 1.

#### **82 WORK PROGRAMME**

The committee considered the work programme.

It was noted that there was a change of date for the April meeting which would now be held on 29 April.

There was a request for an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant to become a standing item. Officers confirmed that a short update would be provided at each meeting going forward.

**RESOLVED:**

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 14.00 and concluded at 16.57

Councillor C Bulman (Chair)