

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Committee**
held on Monday, 11th December, 2023 in the Committee Suite 1, 2 and 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,
G Hayes, R Kain, B Posnett, J Saunders, G Smith and J Place

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Claire Williamson, Director of Education, Strong Start and Integration
Katherine Oldacre, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Danielle Holdcroft, Head of Early Years, Family Help & Prevention
Janet Witkowski, Head of Legal Services
Jennie Summers, Legal Team Manager
Nikki Wood-Hill, Lead Finance Partner
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Laura Smith. Cllr John Place attended as a substitute.

56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made in relation to item 6,
Proposed Closure of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Bollington:

- Cllr Place declared that he was a governor of the school
- Cllr G Smith declared that he was a NASUWT officer

57 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

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

58 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

59 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND INCLUSION (SENIF) POLICY WITH CONSULTATION

The committee received the report which requested approval to implement the revised mechanism of support provided to enable children with special educational needs to access their early education entitlements.

RESOLVED (by majority):

That the Children and Families Committee consider the outcome from the consultation process and approve implementation of the policy set out in appendix 1 for new applications from January 2024, and all funding via the new policy from September 2024.

60 PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, BOLLINGTON

The committee received the report which reported on the outcomes of the pre-publication consultation and the statutory public consultation undertaken in respect of the proposed closure of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Bollington.

A query was raised as to how many other maintained schools in Cheshire East were forecasting future budget deficits. Officers undertook to provide a written response. It was requested that the committee be informed early to provide the opportunity for members to consider any mitigations.

Assurances were given that School Improvement Officers were working to understand the financial situations of schools to avoid further closures.

A query was raised regarding the implications section of the report, specifically paragraph 51 which referred to implications on rural communities and stated that this was not classed as a rural school. It was queried what the impact would be on surrounding rural communities and relocating pupils. Officers advised that there was a set definition of rural schools within guidance which must be adhered to but that this would be looked into further following the meeting.

The Director of Education, Strong Start and Integration asked the committee to note a minor change to the wording of the recommendations in the report, with recommendation 1 now reading 'Approve the process to date of the implementation of the closure the closure of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, effective from 31st December 2023, subject to the Department for Education (DfE) revoking the Academy Order'. Recommendation 2 remained the same as set out in the report.

RESOLVED (by majority):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Approve the process to date of the implementation of the closure the closure of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, effective from 31st December 2023, subject to the Department for Education (DfE) revoking the Academy Order
2. In line with Department for Education guidance, Opening and Closing Maintained Schools, approve the publication of the decision to implement the closure of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

61 BASFORD EAST NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL POSTPONEMENT TO SCHEME

The committee received the report which provided an update on the proposed new primary school which would be located on the Basford East housing development in Shavington. The report notified the committee of the delay to the opening of the primary school due to the housing developer entering into administration.

A query was raised as to whether a new developer taking over the site could submit new plans which may not include a primary school. It was also queried, in relation to paragraph 26 on financial implications, whether some funds had already been spent on pre-construction costs. A written response would be provided.

It was noted that Phase 2 of the development was continuing and it was queried what the impact of this would be on home to school transport and what was being done with the Section 106 contribution from Phase 2. A written response would be provided.

A request was made for the committee to receive earlier notice if this issue arose with any developments in future.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee note the delay for the opening new school at Basford East, Shavington.

62 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCORECARD QUARTER 2 2023/24

The committee received the Children and Families scorecard for quarter 2 of 2023-24.

A query was raised regarding the figure provided for social worker vacancies at the end of the period and whether this represented a percentage or full time equivalent. Officers advised that they would refine

the way this was presented in future reports to ensure the data was more meaningful.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee scrutinise the performance of children's services for quarter 2.

63 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered the work programme. It was noted that officers would review and refine the January agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 and concluded at 11.30

Councillor C Bulman (Chair)