

Children's Select Committee

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 31 OCTOBER 2023 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr Helen Belcher OBE, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Mike Sankey,
Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Bridget Wayman, Dr Mike Thompson, John Hawkins,
Cllr Trevor Carbin (Substitute) and Cllr Daniel Cave (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr Peter Hutton, Cllr Laura Mayes, Jen Salter, Helean Hughes, Cate Mullen,
Melissa Hardwell

103 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr Suzanne Wickham
Cllr Antonio Piazza
Cllr Christopher Williams
Cllr Kelvin Nash
Cllr Mark Verbinnen

104 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 21 September 2023, as a true and correct record.

105 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

106 **Chairman's Announcements**

The following announcements were made through the chair:

Executive response to Youth Provision/Area Board Youth Funding Task Group

The Chair read a response to the Youth Provision/Area Board Youth Funding Task Group from

'We have reviewed the recommendations from the Youth provision and Area Board youth funding task group, however, have had insufficient time to complete a comprehensive assessment and response. The recommendations require detailed consideration and input from multiple departments, including legal services regarding the parameters of Area Board grant funding. Additionally, the recommendations need to be considered alongside the new statutory guidance for local authorities' youth provision, which was issued by DCMS on 27 September 2023. A full executive response will be provided for the Children's Select Committee meeting on 24 January 2024.'

We understand there is a specific need for a prompt response to the recommendations regarding the existing Area Board grant criteria for youth funding. To respond fully to the task group recommendations, we can confirm that amendments will be made to the current criteria to enable greater flexibility with revenue funding, the aim being to enable an element of continued funding where the project has a plan to become financially sustainable, whilst accepting that year on year funding may not be possible. Currently, it is possible for an organisation to apply for more than two projects within a financial year. The third (and any subsequent) application will be referred by Officers to the grant assessment panel for consideration. The panel is in place to support appropriate enforcement of the criteria, whilst enabling suitable positive community initiatives that require an exception. Any questions regarding the Area Board funding criteria or the role of the Grant Assessment Panel can be referred to Rhys Schell, Service Manager, Engagement and Partnerships.'

Other announcements:

Members were reminded that an Exceptional Children's Select Committee Meeting would take place on 7 December 2023 and would include a review and scrutiny of the Safety Valve Management Plan before the Council submits its draft plan the DfE by 15 December 2023.

A Joint Rapid Scrutiny to review the development of ICB's Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Strategy, alongside the Health Select Committee, invited Children's Select Committee members to take part.

The chair gave his thanks on behalf of the committee to officers and councillors who put in hard work for the recent OFSTED inspection.

107 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

108 **Young Carers in Wiltshire**

The committee received an update on the current and intended future provision regarding young people in Wiltshire who were providing unpaid care, young carers. Presented by Melanie Nicolaou.

The Council had conducted 18 months of coproduction with young carers across Wiltshire including within schools. The feedback received included a need to improve the identification of young carers and raising awareness among younger people as many did not understand they were included in the young carers bracket. The report set out the actions the council had undertaken and its responsibilities. Special attention was drawn on the need to ensure all plans are age appropriate and therefore a special service certification of 5-25yo had been established.

A new draft strategy was attached and feedback from the committee was welcomed before an intention to tender with a new provider in April 2024.

Debate

The committee reaffirmed the importance of supporting young carers.

It was clarified that the statistics of how many young carers had been identified and offered support was being sought out through upcoming scrutiny and audits. More work was being done to improve the accessibility and readability of the statistics that were available.

An impending newsletter within schools was highlighted as a measure to raise awareness and improve monitoring. The committee were made aware that young carers could self-refer and no assessment would be needed to access support.

It was clarified that the Council run a lot of the services for carers and had both commissioned and voluntary un-commissioned in support.

It was explained that the upcoming contract tender had been in development for 6 years and lots of time had been spent with carers developing it. Conversation around tendering had been ongoing for over a year and only the "business end" was left.

It was made clear that those who stop caring due to the death of who they had been caring for would still receive support for up to 18 months and a digital offer through an app was also available. The framework for delivery was still being considered.

Issues surrounding power of attorney for young carers was highlighted. Support was needed when family matters still require attention but the young person is not old enough to automatically assume that responsibility.

While praise was given for a more approachable report that gave better detail on support for younger carers, criticism was made at a lack of evidence into how in practise the support would be carried out. Concern was raised over the timeline of tendering and clarification was requested at the upcoming extraordinary meeting of the Childrens Select Committee on 7 December 2023.

Resolved:

- i) To note the plans for intended future provision regarding young carers in Wiltshire.**
- ii) To receive an update with details of the service specifications when the strategy has been agreed, to enable the committee to review how the performance framework will operate.**

109 **Special Educational Needs (SEND) Provision**

The committee received a report on SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Place Planning and Provision in Wiltshire. Presented by Melissa Hardwell and Cate Mullen.

The report covered 4 main areas for update:

1. Education Health Care Needs Assessments and EHCPs
2. Overview of the process to create High Needs places.
3. Current High Needs Provision
4. High Needs projects and priorities

The report and PowerPoint presentation can be found in the agenda pack.

There had been continued demand for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) in Wiltshire and a continued increase in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) which are maintained by Wiltshire Council.

In July 2023 Childrens Select Committee was briefed on the delay to the Silverwood Rowde new build, which was currently 40 weeks behind schedule. In September 2023, new learners took their places in temporary accommodation. Although the arrangements were temporary, children and teaching staff were 'delighted' with their new classrooms.

The refurbishment of the Wilton Road site for Salisbury Academy for Inspirational Learning (SAIL) was on track for completion by December 2023.

Following a successful application for DfE wave 3 funding, the Free School for 130 learners with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs was in the early stage of development.

Wiltshire's first secondary resource bases opened from September 2023 at John of Gaunt and Clarendon (Trowbridge). It was a key priority to expand secondary resource base provision to satisfy the demand (from circa 50 children leaving primary resource bases at year 6, every year) and geographical spread.

Despite the challenges of creating High Needs provision, 519 additional places will have been created in the 3 years to July 2024.

Debate

The committee expressed its thanks and congratulations for a well detailed report that answered a number of questions.

Resolved:

- i) To note the developments outlined in the report relating to the demands for and provision of the Council's Special Education Needs and Disability services.**

110 **Childcare Sufficiency in Wiltshire**

The committee received a report outlining the work the Council had been undertaking to meet local authority standards for early years and pre-school provision including sufficiency, pupil outcomes and Ofsted grades.

A brief summary was provided as a more detailed briefing and Q&A was undertaken before the meeting.

Resolved:

- i) To note the Council's work to meet its statutory duty to make available sufficient childcare in the local area.**
- ii) To receive a progress update in 2024.**

111 **Local Government Association (LGA) peer review of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP)**

The committee received a brief summary from Helean Hughes, Director of Education and Skills on the actions planned in response to the report of the Local Government Association (LGA) peer review that was presented to the Children's Select Committee, 21 September 2023.

Debate

It was clarified that CIL stands for Centre for Independent Living and they run the Youth Pioneering Program for Wiltshire Council.

It was highlighted that more clarification could be given on which "issues" would be constantly ongoing and updated as lessons are learnt year on year.

Resolved:

- l) For the Standing Task Group to receive an update in 12 months**

112 **National Independent Review of Children's Social Care update**

The committee received a summary of the report from Jen Salter, Director of Families and Children on the Government response to Children's Social Care: Stable Homes Built on Love consultation.

Debate

It was clarified that there was potential for a move to a regional fostering agency, however Wiltshire Council would still retain the assessment and support elements with recruitment becoming regional to avoid competition with different rates between local authorities.

Resolved:

- i) To receive an update in Summer 2024 to include learning from pilot projects and other local authorities.**

113 **Regular updates**

Updates on information valuable for the committee but were unlikely to require a decision.

113a Update from Wiltshire Youth Voice Representative

An update including a summary of recent activities of the Wiltshire Youth Union (WYU) and Children in Care Council (CiCC).

The written update was noted.

113b School Ofsted Judgements

An update including information regarding the most recent Ofsted Inspection reports, presenting an ongoing view of the effectiveness of schools as seen by Ofsted Inspection.

Debate

It was clarified that dependant on the type of school (e.g., maintained, academy trust), support would be provided to schools who receive a requires improvement score especially relating to their leadership team.

The written report was noted.

113c DfE Changes - Update from Department for Education

An update on developments relating to children's services arising from the Department for Education.

The written report was noted.

114 **Working together to improve school attendance**

The DfE published new non-statutory guidance in May 2022 to help schools, trusts, governing bodies and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance. The guidance applied from September 2022.

This regular update was an opportunity for the committee to be aware of the latest requirements, as set out in the guidance.

The written report was noted.

115 **Schools Forum**

The committee received a very brief update highlighting key items from the last meeting of Schools Forum, to enable the Children's Select Committee to be informed in a timely manner of the work undertaken by the Schools Forum through the year.

Full agendas and minutes for the Schools Forum can be accessed here [Schools Forum | Wiltshire Council](#)

The written report was noted.

115a Corporate Parenting Panel

The committee received a very brief update highlighting key items from the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel, to enable the Children's Select Committee members, as Corporate Parents, to be informed in a timely manner of the work undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Panel through the year.

Cllr Peter Hutton thanked committee members who assisted with the poem read out at Full Council, to remind all councillors of their responsibilities as corporate parents to foster children.

116 **Directors' update**

The committee received a verbal update from Directors highlighting any key issues (current or emerging), successes or milestones in their respective areas since the last meeting of the committee, which did not require a full agenda item and was not covered elsewhere in the meeting.

Helean Hughes, Director Education and Skills, stated that a DfE visit was underway, and that Cabinet had signed off on the purchase of Calder House in Colerne to assist with the delivery of Alternative Provision (AP).

Helean also mentioned that this would be her last Childrens Select Committee meeting as she would be leaving Wiltshire Council. The committee thanked Helean for her amazing work and dedication and wished her the best of luck.

Jen Salter, Director Families and Children, mentioned that Wiltshire Council was due a Youth Justice Service inspection and with a new framework for inspections imminent it was anticipated that an inspection was incoming.

117 **Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holders' update**

The committee received a verbal update from the Cabinet Member and / or Portfolio Holders highlighting any news, successes or milestones in their respective areas since the last meeting of the committee, which did not require a full agenda item and was not covered elsewhere in the meeting.

Cllr Laura Mayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills, thanked staff for their effort during the recent Ofsted inspections. Cllr Mayes also mentioned her continued mentoring of lead members of Councils across the country, including in Solihull, Slough and Devon.

118 **Chair's update**

The committee received a verbal update from the chair on any work undertaken or news since the last meeting that did not require a full agenda item and was not suitable under Chairman's Announcements (where no debate is allowed).

It was highlighted that the LGA would be conducting a task group focusing on children's mental health. Details of a start date were yet to be confirmed and the chair would be sitting on it.

119 **Overview and Scrutiny Activities Updates**

The committee received updates from active Task Groups, Rapid Scrutiny exercises and the committee's board representatives.

There was no update.

120 **Forward Work Programme**

The committee was asked to note the attached documents showing the relevant items from the overview and scrutiny forward work programme and the latest version of the strategy list for the Children, Education and Skills directorate.

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

121 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Children's Select Committee is an extraordinary meeting on 7 December 2023.

122 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

123 **Glossary**

(Duration of meeting: 10.30am – 13.10pm)

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