



Executive Advisory Panel on Forward Together for Children's Services

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Dorchester
on Monday, 16 April 2018

Present:

Kate Wheller (Chairman)

Katharine Garcia, Susan Jefferies, Bill Pipe, Byron Quayle and David Shortell

Member Attending

Steve Butler, Cabinet Member for Safeguarding

Officer Attending: David Alderson (Senior Adviser, Learning and Inclusion), Gary Binstead (Strategy, Partnerships and Performance Service Manager), Ed Denham (School Admissions Manager), Nick Jarman (Interim Director for Children's Services), Sylvia Lord (Adviser, School and Learning Service) and Helen Whitby (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Cabinet to be held on **Monday, 18 June 2018.**)

Apology for Absence

8 An apology was received from Cllr Deborah Croney.

Code of Conduct

9 There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

10 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2018 were confirmed.

Proposed Changes to Home to School Transport for September 2019 - Item Withdrawn

11 The Panel were informed that as it had not been possible to achieve consensus on the proposed changes to home to school transport for September 2019 the item had been withdrawn. An update would be provided for a future meeting.

Proposed Consultation Proposal on setting up Social Emotional Mental Health and Complex Communication Needs Resource Provision

12 The Panel considered a report by the Senior Manager, Sufficiency, Commissioning and School Organisation on a proposed consultation on setting up Social Emotional Mental Health and Complex Communication Needs Resource provision. The Cabinet had considered a report on a similar subject on 4 April 2018 and this was attached as an appendix.

The Council had already set up Resourced Provision Bases for children with Complex Communication Needs (CCN) at Thomas Hardy and Damers schools in Dorchester, and there were further Bases planned for these children, and also children with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Needs. The next schools to host one of these bases were Parley First School, West Moors Middle School, and Dorchester Learning Centre. This change required a consultation process to be undertaken. It was hoped that, following the consultation, the new resources would be ready for a September 2018 start. Local members had been made aware of the proposals and would be

contacted as part of the consultation process.

In response to questions, it was explained that following consideration at Cabinet, works were ongoing at the Dorchester Learning Centre and that modular units would be provided for the two schools. Details of funding were provided and it was noted that work to provide the extra staff had also been started. More resources would be provided across the County in future in order to provide local specialist provision closer to home.

Members supported that a statutory consultation be undertaken in order to progress roll out of social emotional mental health and complex communications needs resources. They asked to be made aware should any issues arise.

Recommended

That the Cabinet be asked to approve that a 'Statutory Process' 6 week consultation be undertaken in May -June 2018.

Reason for Recommendation

This was a statutory requirement for a Local Authority who wished to add SEN places to an existing provision.

Draft Alternative Provision Strategy

- 13 The Panel considered a report by the Senior Advisor and Virtual School Head on the draft Alternative Provision Strategy.

After January 2013 local authorities became responsible for alternative provision for permanently excluded children and those referred by medical consultants.

In Dorset, alternative provision came through Learning Centres based at Blandford, Christchurch, Dorchester, Sherborne and Weymouth. Alternative provision should be short stay, with children returning to main stream education with additional support, or going to specialist areas. However, children were not moving on and the Learning Centres were now full. This meant that further admissions were restricted to meet the local authority's statutory duty. Places at Blandford and Dorchester were being increased to meet demand. The cost of alternative provision had been met from the Higher Needs Block since 2013.

Since 2006 Dorset had reduced formal exclusions through dual registration. This meant that schools had not needed to purchase off site alternative provision and paid only £4,000 towards the total cost of £17,000 per pupil, leaving the local authority to fund the remainder. The proposed strategy would allow more provision to be commissioned without cost to the authority.

Although Dorset had a good reputation as far as exclusions were concerned, there had been an increase in exclusions for younger children. It was hoped that the Council's Early Intervention and Prevention work would identify children and families at risk earlier and thus reduce the need for support in the longer term.

The Schools Forum had been consulted on the draft strategy. They had expressed concerns about the quality of provision and safeguarding issues, viability of learning centres if numbers were to reduce, the short transition time and that predicted numbers were too low, given the recent increase in permanent exclusions.

Members discussed a number of issues; how successful Dorset had been in avoiding exclusions in the past; why exclusions were increasing; the possible use of the Bovington site to alleviate pressure in future; desk blocking; the effect of children remaining at learning centres rather than moving back to main stream education or onto specialist provision on the Higher Needs Budget; the need for children to be in

main stream schooling wherever possible; the need for early intervention to prevent longer term issues and exclusions; the need for Family Partnership Zones to be brought on stream earlier as a means of increasing early intervention and reducing the need for alternative provision; and the process of referral.

In conclusion. members supported the draft Alternative Provision Strategy as the best means of providing a solution to a difficult problem. They considered it important for the Strategy to be flexible and adaptable, if necessary, following the consultation period. They also suggested that: extra places be provided at the Bovington site when it was in place as a means of alleviating pressure and recognised that structures were constrained by issues such as finance and staffing.

Recommended

That the Cabinet agree that:-

- (a) a formal consultation with all stakeholders from 7 May to 19 June 2018, following the informal pre-consultation with schools and the Schools Forum.
- (b) the presentation of the new draft Alternative Provision Strategy to the meeting of the Schools Forum on 18 March 2018 be noted.
- (c) the Executive Advisory Panel monitor the results of the consultation.
- (d) the Draft Alternative Provision Strategy be referred to the Strategic Alliance as the body with oversight of the Family Partnership Zones.
- (e) the need for future demand be noted.

Work Programme

14 The Panel considered its work programme.

The withdrawn item of Proposed Changes to Home to School Transport for September 2019 was to be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Resolved

That the item of Proposed Changes to Home to School Transport for September 2019 be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Meeting Duration: 2.00 pm - 3.10 pm

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