

AT A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle, Winchester on Tuesday, 19 July 2016.

**PRESENT**

Chairman:

p Councillor Ray Bolton

Vice-Chairman:

a Councillor Roz Chadd

**Councillors:**

p John Bennison	p Tony Hooke
p Ann Briggs	p Roger Huxstep
p Zilliah Brooks	a Warwick Lovegrove
p Rita Burgess	p Ken Moon
p Christopher Carter	a Jackie Porter
p Criss Connor	p Bruce Tennent
p Philip Fawkes	p Ken Thornber
a Judith Grajewski	p Malcolm Wade
p Marge Harvey	p Christopher Wood

**Substitute Members:**

p Keith Evans

**Co-opted Members:**

p Caroline Edmondson: Primary School Parent Governor Representative  
p Andrew March: Secondary School Parent Governor Representative  
a Urzula Topp: Roman Catholic Schools Representative  
p Gary Walker: Special School Parent Governor Representative  
a Jeff Williams: Church of England Schools Representative

**At the invitation of the Chairman:**

p Councillor Peter Edgar – Executive Member for Education  
p Councillor Keith Mans – Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services

141. **BROADCASTING ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman announced that the press and members of the public were permitted to film and broadcast the meeting. Those remaining at the meeting were consenting to being filmed and recorded, and to the possible use of those images and recordings for broadcasting purposes.

142. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roz Chadd and Judith Grajewski. The conservative standing deputy, Councillor Keith Evans, attended in their place. Apologies were also received from Councillor Jackie Porter. It was noted that as the Vice Chairman was absent,

Councillor Chris Carter would deputise in this role for the duration of the meeting.

143. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3 Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Personal interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 4 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

No declarations were made.

144. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising from the minutes:

- Minute 139 (page 4): the potential delivery sites for each district and borough area had been circulated to Members on 11 July.
- Minute 139 (page 8): the recommendations were communicated to the Executive Lead Member in time for his decision day on 1 July, and this formed part of his decision record referred to in Item 6.

145. **DEPUTATIONS**

The Committee did not receive any deputations at this meeting.

146. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman did not make announcements to the meeting.

147. **CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST TO EXERCISE CALL-IN POWERS**

The Committee received a report (Item 6 in the Minute Book) from the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer following a request by a quorum of members of the Select

Committee to exercise call-in powers in respect of a decision by the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services to implement an integrated family support service in Hampshire.

The Chairman outlined to the Committee the reports, the pre-decisions scrutiny meeting held on 1 July 2016, and the outcomes of this meeting which were communicated to the Executive Lead Member for consideration at his decision day on the same date.

The decisions taken by the Executive Lead Member were referred to by the Chairman, and it was noted that decisions the Committee had supported had been taken. In addition, the Executive Lead Member had taken additional decisions which related to the recommendations of the Committee, and feedback from stakeholders to the consultation.

The Chairman referred to a briefing pack containing additional information which had been requested by some Committee members in relation to the family support service. This was not new information, but provided some of the detail sitting under the strategic decision report. The Chairman noted that Members did have the opportunity to request this information prior to the Select Committee meeting on 1 July, but chose not to do so.

The Chairman outlined that the role of the Select Committee would be to determine whether it wished to recommend to the Executive Lead Member that he reconsider his decisions taken on the Family Support Service at his meeting on 1 July, as per Annex 3.

The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer outlined the report and the purpose of the meeting. The process of call in and the related Constitutional process at Annex 5 was explained, and Members were referred to the reasons for the call in provided to date in Annex 4..

The Monitoring Officer's view was that the decision of the Executive Lead Member was in line with the budget decision of the Council in October 2015 and concerned implementation of that budget decision. Therefore, the option open to the Select Committee was to consider whether or not to ask the Executive Lead Member to reconsider his decision. The Monitoring Officer further outlined the role of the Select Committee, which was to hold the Executive to account. However, this did not mean the Select Committee had the power to direct the Executive. Statutory guidance advised that the Executive should take into account the views of the Select Committee, but that it was free to take into account other factors in its decision-making process and make other determinations.

Additionally, it was noted that the statutory guidance to the Local Government Act makes it clear that there should be an appropriate balance between effectively holding the Executive to account and being able to question decisions before they are implemented, and allowing effective and efficient decision making by the Executive within the policy framework and budget agreed by the full Council.

The Chairman moved to debate. During the discussion, the following information was heard:

- That the new Family Support Service would move towards greater targeting of vulnerable children through an extended emphasis on group work. Although the number of designated centres was reducing, and there would be less staff providing the model, the number of children to be reached in future was estimated to increase based on this change in focus.
- The new model would be less dependent on buildings and more focused on providing flexible support across a range of drop-in locations and, where appropriate, in service user's own homes.
- When Children's Centres were introduced, the range of partner-provided universal services (such as JobCentrePlus and Health Visiting) was not as extensive as they are today. It was imperative that the Family Support Service was reflective of the expected partnership approach in supporting vulnerable children and their families.
- The footfall data showed that some Centres were being underutilised, and there was Hampshire-based evidence to suggest that there was no causal link between a higher number of Children's Centres, and a reduction in the number of children coming into care.
- That the proposed service would focus on both preventative and targeted work for those requiring support. One of the aims of the Family Support Service would be to educate families on how to be more self-sufficient, providing support and interventions until such time as families can return to managing life independently, if appropriate.

Some Members expressed their view that they were not comfortable with the reduction in designated children's centres and the refocusing of support to those children at levels 2 and 3, as they believed that Children's Centres should provide universal services that focused on both 'prevention' and 'cure'. Questions were asked on whether the implementation of the Service could be delayed or paused whilst further work was undertaken to ensure that all families could access those services and the impact could be evaluated following the changes. Other Members disagreed with this approach, noting that government policy was no longer universality; in a time of austerity, it was

better to focus limited resources on children and families in need, especially as many of those responding to the consultation were not economically disadvantaged.

The information provided in the briefing paper to Members in advance of the meeting was discussed. Some Members questioned the data presented and received responses to these. Other Members set out how this information provided additional support for the decision taken by the Executive Lead Member.

Members expressed their views on the wider context of the reduction to children's centres, both in terms of the change in government policy, and the reduced financial envelope in which the County Council provided services. Discussion was held by some Members on the Grant Equalisation Reserve and additional savings found, and whether this could be used to support a pilot of the Family Support Service, or to keep all Children's Centres in operation until alternative funding streams could be found. Following discussion and advice previously received from the Monitoring Officer, it was noted that the budget for Children's Services 2016/17 was agreed in October 2015, and the decision taken on the Family Support Service was in line with this.

In summarising the debate, the Chairman reminded the Committee of the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer's advice on the law, the Constitution and the option open to the committee, as well as her confirmation that the decision of the Executive Lead Member was within the budget passed by the County Council in October 2015, to which all members contributed. The Committee had also heard a number of answers from the Director of Children's Services and his representatives on the proposed Family Support Service model.

The Chairman's view was that it would be improper to ask the Executive Lead Member to reconsider his decision given that the Committee had already considered the proposals and related papers in detail, and had agreed to support the recommendations to the Executive Lead Member.

However, in line with the option open to the Select Committee, the Chairman proposed that a vote should be taken on the recommendation in the report that the Select Committee should consider whether or not to request the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services to reconsider his decision as set out in the Decision Record attached as an Annex to the report. The recommendation was voted upon as follows:

- 12 members of the Committee voted in favour of not requesting the Executive Lead Member to reconsider his decision.
- 5 members of the Committee voted in favour of requesting the Executive Lead Member to reconsider his decision.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services should not be requested to reconsider his decision as set out in the Decision Record attached as Annex 3 to the report.

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Chairman, 2 November 2016

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