
MEETING	DECISION SESSION - CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
DATE	25 OCTOBER 2012
PRESENT	COUNCILLOR LOOKER (CABINET MEMBER)
IN ATTENDANCE	COUNCILLOR RICHARDSON

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 13 March 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there were no registrations to speak under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF A LOOKED AFTER SUPPORT SERVICE FOR YORK

The Cabinet Member considered a report that described the development of a specialist service for the support of looked after children. In particular the service would facilitate, at a single venue, supervised and assessed contact arrangements between looked after children and their parents.

The Cabinet Member noted that the proposed new arrangements would create a centre of expertise in relation to children's contact needs. The dedicated focus would improve the quality of the contact as well as the recording and reporting on this.

The new arrangements would also provide economies of scale in relation to staff time, the utilisation of buildings and savings in

transport costs. The Cabinet Member noted the capital expenditure that would be required to refurbish the building that had been identified for the centre.

The Cabinet Member considered the following options detailed in the report.

Option 1: Proposed the refurbishment of an existing council property - 6 Nursery Drive. The estimated cost to carry out the adaptations and refurbishment required was £248k. A capital grant of £58K had been identified which could be spent on this project. The remaining £190k would then be funded by prudential borrowing over a period of ten years.

Option 2: To continue to provide the service from the many different children centres and other settings in which contact meetings are currently arranged.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the approval of Cabinet, Option 1 (i.e. the proposed refurbishment of 6 Nursery Drive) be approved, on the understanding that the revenue costs of this prudential borrowing be funded from the Adults, Children and Education (ACE) revenue budget.

REASON: The full effect of the service improvement will be achieved by agreeing to option 1 and a single designated site delivering both service improvement and efficiency.

5. CHILDREN'S HOME PROVISION: PROPOSED CHANGES TO MODEL OF DELIVERY

The Cabinet Member considered a report that proposed a transfer of children's home delivery in York from the local authority to an external provider.

It was noted that the proposal was based on a review of the local authority's placement usage over the past five years and a growing need for more specialist and diverse provision for fewer young people. The Cabinet Member noted that the proposal would help to achieve significant budget savings whilst improving the council's ability to match local need with greater

placement choice. Officers gave details of the efforts that had been made to seek to ensure that capacity within the unit was fully utilised but nevertheless the unit costs were currently high.

The Cabinet Member paid tribute to the work that staff at Wenlock Terrace carried out and stated that the service was greatly valued and there was a commitment for it to continue. She gave consideration to the following options detailed in the report:

- Option 1: York continues with current local, council provided childrens home
- Option 2: Transfer of local provision and external beds to one organisation through commissioning
- Option 3: Cease to make local provision and source all placements externally

The Cabinet Member stated that it was imperative that the resource was not diminished and sought assurances as to the safeguards that would be in place to ensure the quality of provision. Details were given of the tendering exercise and of the inspections that would take place. The Local Authority would not enter into a partnership with any provider who was not rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding for the delivery of children's residential care in all of their existing homes. Details were also given of the arrangements that would be in place to ensure safe placements.

- RESOLVED:
- (i) That option 2 in the report be progressed (i.e. the transfer of local provision and external beds to one organisation through commissioning). A full tendering exercise would then proceed to scope a block contract with a provider to take over the running of the children's home and leasing of the building and the provision of a defined number of block purchased local and external placements.
 - (ii) That the awarding of the contract be delegated to officers subject to it meeting

quality standards and achieving the required savings target.

REASON: This option affords the scope for savings without any reduction in the quality of placements.

6. DEVELOPMENT OF A LOCAL INTEGRATED FAMILY SERVICE

The Cabinet Member considered a report that set out the development of a new locality based Integrated Family Service (IFS). The new service incorporated a local response to the government's Troubled Families initiative whilst also serving a wider group of vulnerable families in the city. Officers stated that there would be a cohesive approach to ensure early intervention and to provide intensive support.

The new Integrated Family Service would combine the skills and experience of the Catalyst Family Intervention Project workers, three parent support advisors and the family support workers currently placed within social care. The service would sit outside social care and work intensively with families with children on the edge of care or other statutory interventions to reduce the stresses in families and prevent escalation. The Cabinet Member stated that she was pleased to note the involvement of other partners, including health and the police.

A pilot scheme was already in place and there would be rigorous tracking systems in place to monitor outcomes.

The Cabinet Member gave consideration to the financial implications, as outlined in paragraphs 39 to 42 of the report.

RESOLVED: (i) That a new Integrated Family Service be created combining the skills and experience of the Catalyst Family Intervention project workers, three parent support advisors and the family support workers currently placed within social care. This service would sit outside social care and work intensively with families with children on the edge of care or other statutory interventions.

- (ii) That once the new arrangements become established, the Cabinet Member receive regular updates on the service.

REASONS:

- (i) Rising numbers of looked after children and children subject to a child protection plan highlights the need for a new approach to working with families to prevent issues escalating to this scale. Evidence suggests that intensive work with families, outside of the remit of social care, can be successful.
- (ii) To monitor the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

Councillor Looker, Cabinet Member

[The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 4.40 pm].