

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families held on Tuesday, 12 September 2017 at 3:30pm in Conference Room B, Civic Offices.

Also Present

Councillors Rob Wood

5. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Services and Sarah Newman, Deputy Director of Children's Social Care.

Councillor Brent gave his sincere apologies for the later start time for the meeting. He explained he had needed to attend the Children & Young People's Board in London. He was hoping to leave the meeting by 12:00 to get an earlier train, but due to the discussions that came up at the meeting, Cllr Brent needed to stay to raise items from Portsmouth's point of view, for Portsmouth's children and young people.

6. Declarations of interest

There were no pecuniary interests declared. However, Councillor Wood wished to place on record that his son-in-law works for the Harbour School, his daughter works for Motiv8 and his Step Grandson works for the Housing team and his sister-in-law is the Director for Academies and Free Schools at the Education Funding Agency. He also wished to record that he is a local authority governor at both Charter Academy, Ark Ayrton Primary Academy and Ark Dickens Primary Academy.

7. Children & Families Budget Monitoring Report for the First Quarter 2017-18

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The report was introduced by Graham Smith, Group Accountant.

He explained that the initial projected overspend for the portfolio was £1.6m at the start of the year, however the projected overspend at the end of Quarter 1 is forecast to be £2.8m. The Children Social Care and Safeguarding service is projecting an overspend of £2.9m where external residential placements have substantially grown over the first quarter. Section 6 of the report detailed the two capital schemes at Tangiers Road and Beechside Children's homes.

Councillor Wood raised concern over the substantial increase from the initial projected overspend of £1.6m to the current forecast of £2.8m. He also

commented that that savings obtained through staff vacancies are not a permanent saving. He added that the overspend is increasing and suggested the trend needed to be monitored when setting budgets.

Councillor Brent explained that officers are rigorously looking at the external, high cost placements to ensure they are appropriate and obtain the best value for money; and there is a review team in place. There is a national trend of LA's increasing external residential placements, it is not unique to Portsmouth with, all local authorities facing similar pressures. The Council is looking at reducing the need for external residential placements. With regard to the staffing vacancy levels, he agreed that whilst these provided temporary financial savings it was a "false economy" if the vacancies are held and advised that the vacancies are being filled. It was also noted that the numbers of looked after children is generally increasing.

DECISIONS: The Cabinet Member

- (1) Noted the Children and Families Portfolio forecast budget position, at the end of June 2016, of £2.8m in excess of current approved cash limit provision.**
- (2) Supported the ongoing process of budget review and implementation of proposals to reduce the projected overspend position and deliver a balanced budget within the area of Children's Social Care.**
- (3) Approved that power be delegated to the Deputy Director of Children's and Families - Safeguarding, in consultation with the S.151 officer, to enter into the necessary contracts for the capital works proposed at both the Tangiers and Beechside children's homes as set out in section 6 of this report.**

The meeting concluded at 3.50 pm.

Councillor Ryan Brent
Chair