

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families held on Tuesday, 5 December 2017 at 2.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Also Present

Councillors Rob Wood

8. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

9. 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.

10. Children and Families Portfolio Budget Monitoring Report for the Second Quarter 2017-18

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Graham Smith, Group Accountant introduced the report and explained the revenue cash limit anticipated overspend is £2.4million in 2017-18. The whole of the overspend is attributable to social care and safeguarding. This is accounted for by the number and cost of client placements and in particular external residential placements.

In response to a question from Councillor Wood, Mr Smith said that the projected £2.4 million overspend was in line with what officers had predicted at the end of quarter 1. The variability of the placement costs is a concern as this fluctuates. Sarah Newman, Deputy Director of Children's Social Care added that there will be increased responsibilities for local authorities from April 2018 for care leavers. Mrs Newman did not think that the council had received a response from central government but usually with increased responsibilities additional funding does follow. The Council has received money from the Public Health Transformation Fund to work with families in an intensive way to keep them at home and to address problematic behaviours with young people being at home.

In response to a concern raised by Councillor Wood, the Cabinet Member said he had been in conversation with the S151 officer and he believed that when new burdens are placed on a local authorities they will be in a position

to receive additional funding to counteract those additional responsibilities. He reassured Councillor Wood that as Cabinet Member he would lobby to ensure that children's social care is being adequately funded and demand is met. He added that Portsmouth is not in a unique position and this is a national issue.

The Cabinet Member:

- (1) Noted the Children and Families Portfolio forecast budget position, at the end of September 2017, of £2.4m 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) Noted the capital programme spending is currently in line with the approved capital budget.**

11. Annual Adoption Panel Activity Report November 2017 (information only)

(TAKE IN INFORMATION REPORT)

The report was introduced by Jackie Clark, Service Leader for Adoption who said that the numbers of children being adopted were consistent with last year. The adoption recruiter figure for the first two quarters however had dropped this year by 30% and this reflected the national position. Currently Portsmouth recruit adopters from outside of the city so are they competing with other local authorities Southampton, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The proposed regional adoption agency will be in place from October 2018 and one of the benefits of this will be that the four local authorities will all have access to the same pool of adopters, rather than competing for them.

In response to questions the following matters were clarified:

- In terms of looking at the number of children coming into care versus the number leaving approximately 80% 0-13 year olds leave care: 30% 0-5 year olds return home, 30% of 0-5 year olds are placed for adoption and 20% of 0-5 year olds are placed under special guardianship. This takes them out of the care system and PCC offers financial allowances to support adoptive carers and special guardians. For 6-13 year olds 50 % go home, 15% go on to be placed for adoption and 15% under special guardianship. We provide a higher allowance to adopters and special guardians providing placements to 6-13 year olds as their needs are likely to be more challenging. There is a government adoption support fund that can be used to support challenging placements. There are a whole range of allowances that can be utilised to support children coming out of the care system.
- The national picture is that the number of people coming forward to adopt is falling and the adoption leadership team are looking at why

this might be. Mrs Newman said that some of the challenges faced by adopters had been reported in the media which might have had an impact on the perception of adoption. The numbers are kept under review so locally have a clear picture of the situation and are hoping the regionalised system will assist.

- PCC have invested in the adoption support service and Portsmouth has done very well in terms of obtaining funds from the adoption support fund in the first two quarters and it is clear we have strong offer in terms of adoption support. PCC is also work closely with neighbouring agencies.
- PCC is investing in reunification and are seeing significant numbers of children 0-13 come into care for a period of time and then return home as a result of the support that has been provided.
- The Regional Adoption Agency planning process includes the Adopter Forum run by Adoption UK. Portsmouth also has a representative cohort that meet regularly who feedback to PCC and the Adoption Forum on what would it would like to see in terms of Portsmouth adopters. There are representatives from each project board and they are very clear on what they do well including providing a personal service. Decision making for each locality will remain with the local authority.

The Cabinet Member added that it is important to note that the focus for PCC is not solely on the financial element, it is always about the best interests of the young people.

The Cabinet Member thanked officers for their reports.

The Cabinet Member noted the report

The meeting concluded at 2.25 pm.

Councillor Ryan Brent
Chair