

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families held on Friday, 6 July 2018 at 4.45 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Rob Wood (Cabinet Member)
Councillor Ryan Brent (Opposition Spokesperson)

5. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Judith Smyth and Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education.

6. Declaration of interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared. However, Councillor Wood wished to place on record that his son-in-law works for the Harbour School, and his daughter works for Motiv8. 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. Budget Monitoring Outturn Report for 2017-18

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The report was introduced by Graham Smith, Group Accountant.

Councillor Wood noted that the new administration had inherited this budget however in his view the budget figure for placements has not been adequately serviced. He was pleased that the placement costs had been broken down in table 2 as the issue is mainly in the placements. He felt it was important to understand the principle of each of these units so they can be delivered at the best rate. This will continue to be monitored.

In response to a question from Councillor Brent, Mrs Newman, Deputy Director Children and Families Services said that in relation to the work that Newton Consultants undertook it was clear that Portsmouth is spending significantly less on children than other authorities, but still achieving good results. Portsmouth is one of the lower spending authorities in the UK. Councillor Wood said the council needed to be careful that the low spend does not drift into not spending enough and this would be a fine balance.

DECISIONS: The Cabinet Member:

(1) Noted the Children and Families Portfolio financial outturn position for 2017/18 of £3.383m in excess of the approved cash limit position.

(2) Noted the current expectation that overspends represent a first call against the following year cash limit allocation.

(3) Noted the ongoing budget pressures within the portfolio, as highlighted in the report, and supports the ongoing process of budget review and realignment designed to reduce the projected overspend position within the area of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding.

(4) Noted that the capital programme spending is line with the approved capital budget.

8. Bi-annual adoption report (information only)

(TAKE IN INFORMATION REPORT)

The report was introduced by Jackie Clark, Service Leader Adoption. She added that at the time of writing the report there were four other applications for adoption orders pending in court and these had subsequently been granted.

Councillor Wood said he was concerned about the drop in the number of adopters and was keen to take on board spend to save scenarios; for instance the Regional Adoption Agency being used to spread resources and give a wider choice.

Councillor Wood asked about the reason for cancelled adoption panels. Ms Clark said that the cancelled panels was a legacy from 2014/15 when they increased the number of panels to twice a month, to take account the increase of prospective adoptive applications. The number of panels was kept at this level but following the panel chairs report they are considering reverting back to one panel a month. They do however have an adopter panel with a central list, so it would still not delay any child's plan for linking as they would be able to set up additional panels if required.

In response from questions from Councillor Brent, Mrs Newman explained that:

- With regard to the length of care proceedings, Portsmouth is performing better than other local authorities using Portsmouth court. Portsmouth court generally is in the top performing courts in terms of timeliness.
- The recent adopter recruitment event at the Spinnaker Tower was well attended. Following the event seven prospective adopters' families are currently at the pre application stage.

The Cabinet Member said that he was keen that feedback from those who attended the event be shared with all involved with the event and also councillors so they know numbers and receive a brief evaluation of the event.

Councillor Wood thanked officers for the report.

The Cabinet Member noted the information report.

The meeting concluded at 5.15 pm.

Councillor Rob Wood
Chair