

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education held on Thursday, 1 October 2020 at 4.00 pm held virtually.

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (Cabinet Member)
Councillors Terry Norton
Jeanette Smith

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Horton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she is a governor at Craneswater Junior School. Councillor Norton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as he is employed at Mayfield School through a cover agency, his partner is employed at Mayfield School and his daughter attends it. Councillor Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she is a paid official for Hampshire branch UNISON and represents support staff in Hampshire schools.

3. Update to Foster Carer Adaptions Policy

The report was introduced by Alison Smart, Housing Business Partner.

The Cabinet Member said this was a helpful policy and the change in name was sensible.

DECISIONS: The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education:

- (1) Approved the amendments to the policy to provide financial support to carers who meet the requirements as laid out in the policy at appendix A.**
- (2) Gave delegated authority to the Director of Children, Families and Education to approve individual business cases in line with finance rules.**
- (3) Agreed that going forwards the foster carer adaptation policy be referred to as the carer adaptation policy, covering all carers within Portsmouth.**

4. Children Families and Education Portfolio Budget Monitoring Report for the Financial Year End 2019-20

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager.

DECISIONS: The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education:

- (1) Noted the Children, Families and Education Portfolio financial outturn position for 2019/20 of £3.3m in excess of the approved cash limit provision.**
- (2) Noted the ongoing budget pressures within the portfolio, as highlighted in the report.**
- (3) Noted the position in respect of the approved capital schemes for the portfolio.**

5. Children, Families and Education Portfolio Budget Monitoring Report for the First Quarter 2020/21

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager.

In response to a question regarding the impact of COVID-19 officers advised that there were some additional costs, but that these are being managed corporately as part of the COVID-19 response. The portfolio overspend forms part of the £34 million of pressures related to COVID-19 reported corporately.

In response to a question to the Cabinet Member, Councillor Horton said that the administration are writing to government to raise concerns on the funding shortfall and will continue to apply pressure. She added that the strategy for sustainability, particularly around family safeguarding, was beginning, despite Covid, to have a beneficial impact on spend long term.

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director of Children, Families, Education, added that in the short term the home to school transport budget pressure has reduced because of schools not being open to all children, although if the Government grant were not repeated in 2021-2022 and the current social distancing requirements (which had led to a need for more minibuses) remained in place there would be a significant pressure. On school improvement it was possible that the projected additional spend on supporting digital learning might reduce by quarter 2.

Councillor Norton and Smith both raised concerns about the financial pressures on schools as a result of the pandemic. Councillor Norton said in the schools he had visited the grants are being put to good use. He did have concerns on the cover costs due to COVID-19 from a schools perspective.

DECISION: The Cabinet Member noted the Children, Families and Education Portfolio forecast revenue and capital budget positions, as at the end of June 2020, together with the variance and pressure explanations.

6. 2019-20 Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn Report

The report was introduced by Alison Egerton, Group Accountant.

In response to a question regarding the 173k overspend for special schools, Alison Egerton explained that when officers set the budget for special schools they assume the places are all taken by Portsmouth City Council children. In reality a number are funded from other local authorities and those home local authorities are responsible for paying the Element 3 top up funding. This gives PCC a small contingency in the overall budget which allows officers to deal with overspends elsewhere in the high needs block. In particular officers find it is difficult to forecast the out of city pupils and those in mainstream schools with EHCPs, due to the volume and complexity of need and officers use that as a way of offsetting potential overspends in future years.

DECISION: The Cabinet Member noted the year-end outturn budget position for the Dedicated Schools Grant as at the end of March 2020 and the variance explanations contained within this report.

7. Dedicated Schools Grant 2020-21 Quarter 1 budget monitoring and budget revision

The report was introduced by Alison Egerton, Group Accountant.

DECISIONS: the Cabinet Member

(1) Noted the forecast year-end budget position for the Dedicated Schools Grant as at 30 June 2020, together with the associated explanations contained within this report.

(2) Approved the revisions to the 2020-21 budget as set out in Appendix 1 and section 4.

8. Maintained School balances as at 31 March 2020

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager.

DECISION: The Cabinet Member noted the level of maintained schools' revenue balances and capital balances as at 31st March 2020 as shown in Appendices 2 & 3 and the monitoring action taken by the council.

9. School funding arrangements 2021-22

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager.

In response to a question from the Cabinet Member, Angela Mann explained that the early years funding is based on the previous January census but things are different this year due to COVID-19. Officers had been told that for next year's allocation it is anticipated that the numbers will be lower and they are going to use January 2020 numbers to assess the funding. Angela added that she believed numbers were reducing and the count will take place during the October half term.

DECISIONS: the Cabinet Member:

- (1) Noted the Department for Education's proposed changes to school revenue funding arrangements for 2021-22 as set out in this report.**
- (2) Approved the proposals for implementing the local funding formula arrangements as set out in this report; in particular to:**
 - Implement the National Funding Formula rates for both primary and secondary schools in in 2021-22, as set out in Appendix 1;**
 - Implement a minimum funding guarantee (MFG) of at least +0.5% and up to +2.0% subject to affordability, for 2021-22 as set out in paragraphs 5.16**
 - The method of managing affordability as set out in paragraph 5.17.**
 - Implement the disapplication request as set out in section 6.**

10. Annual Adoption Agency Activity Report March 2020 (information report)

The report was introduced by Sarah Daly, Deputy Director of Children and Families. The Cabinet Member welcomed the positive reflections in the report on the impact of the new Regional Adoption Agency and thanked officers for all their work.

The Cabinet Member noted the report.

11. Amalgamation of Wimborne Infant and Junior Schools - reporting back of the SO58 decision of 25 March 2020

The Cabinet Member noted the decision.

The meeting concluded at 4.55 pm.

Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair