

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People held at
2.00 pm on Wednesday, 16 November 2016

Present:

Members: Councillor Ruane (Cabinet Member)
 Councillor M Lapsa (Shadow Cabinet Member)
 Councillor P Seaman (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Employees (by
Directorate)

People: S Watson

Resources: N David, A Groves, U Patel

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2016 were signed as a true record.
There were no matters arising.

3. Concordat on Children in Custody

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which provided an overview of the Concordat on Children in Custody.

The Government had written to all local authorities about the transfer of children, who have been charged and denied bail, from police custody to local authority accommodation. Police forces have a duty to secure these transfers under Section 38(6) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and local authorities have a duty to accept these transfers under section 21 of the Children Act 1989. However, as a number of reports in recent years have highlighted, there are currently widespread failures to meet these statutory obligations nationally.

It is of the greatest importance that police and local authorities work together to ensure that the welfare of children is protected and these statutory obligations to some of the most vulnerable children in society are met. Children should not be spending the night in police cells when the law entitles them to be transferred to alternative accommodation. To improve transfer arrangements, two factors are essential; a clear understanding of the respective duties and effective local collaboration between police forces and local authorities. It is to drive improvement in these areas that a multi-agency Working Group on Children in Custody, led by the Home Office and Department for Education, has developed the Concordat on Children in Custody as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Concordat clearly sets out each party's responsibilities and provides a protocol for how transfers should work in practice. Between its signatories, it is both an agreement of understanding and a declaration of commitment to ensuring that these duties are fulfilled. The Government will be publishing the Concordat in England shortly and would like all local authorities, police forces and PCCs to become signatories in advance so that commitment to children in the area can be reflected in the published document. The Government are strongly encouraging local authorities to sign up, to make contact with each other and to use this Concordat to begin the process of ensuring that children in custody are given the protection to which the law entitles them.

The Cabinet Member requested clarification on the 14 cases where bail was refused between January 2015 and February 2016; whether the 14 cases referred to one child and a number of incidences or a number of children. In addition, the Cabinet Member requested that the figures for the total number of cases from February 2016 to November 2016 be emailed to members for information.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:

- 1. Approves the Concordat on Children in Custody as set out in the attached document as Appendix 1.**
- 2. Endorses the proposal to sign the Concordat as a statement of intent to work with the West Midlands authorities as one single force.**
- 3. Agrees to developing local agreement to ensure operational arrangements are in place.**

4. Outstanding Issues Report

There were no outstanding issues.

5. Improving and Redesigning City Council Children's Residential Care Provision

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People which sought approval to consult on improving and redesigning City Council children's residential care provision.

The Ofsted Inspection of Coventry's Children's Services published in March 2014 judged the three areas of 'Looked After Children', 'Leaving Care' and 'Adoption Performance' as requiring improvement. In response to the need to improve Children's Services in Coventry, The Children's Services Strategy 2016-2018 was developed to set out a Vision for Children's Service and a detailed transformation programme that would support the improvement of Children's Services and would place children at the heart of everything the Council do.

The improvement of these services sits within the context of a significant savings pressure for Children's Services with a requirement to achieve in excess of £7 million in 2017/2018, rising to in excess of £11 million from 2018/2019.

The Children's Services Transformation Programme converts the vision for the service into action that would ensure sustainable service improvement in Coventry. The programme comprised of eight discrete projects, largely falling under the 2 broad themes of workforce redesign and looked after children placements.

Children's Internal Residential Care Redesign was one of the eight projects and sets out to improve the quality of children's homes provided by the Council, whilst realising revenue benefits. It was planned that the redesign of the service would reduce spend on external residential provision by creating additional internal capacity by utilising the existing resource tied up in the current provision. The proposal was to provide homes with additional capacity, higher levels of occupancy and improved quality of care that represent better value for money.

The report recommended a period of stakeholder consultation to explore options for the reconfiguration of the service by providing 4 smaller homes for children to replace the existing provision at Gravel Hill and The Grange children's homes. The proposal is based on an identified need to create a more coherent, modern and suitable model of provision for the future care of Coventry's children and young people who require a residential home while they are being looked after by the local authority.

The Cabinet Member requested a report to be submitted to his next scheduled meeting detailing information in relation to the current contract and to the commissioning of services, the cost implications and service providers.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People supports a period of consultation on the proposal to change the way that Council operated Children's Residential Care Homes are provided.

(Note: This item was considered as urgent business, the reason for urgency being to enable the consultation process to commence without any delay.)

6. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 2.20 pm)