



## Executive Advisory Panel on Forward Together for Children's Services

Minutes of the meeting held at on Tuesday, 5 September 2017

**Present:**

Councillor Kate Wheller (Chairman)  
Councillor Susan Jefferies (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Katharine Garcia, Bill Pipe and Byron Quayle.

**Members Attending**

Councillors Steve Butler, Cabinet member for Safeguarding and Deborah Croney, Cabinet member for Economic Growth, Education and Learning and Skills.

**Officer Attending:** Sara Tough (Corporate Director for Children's Services and Adult and Community Services), Matthew Piles (Service Director – Economy), Patrick Myers (Assistant Director, Design & Development, Children's Services), Jay Mercer (Assistant Director, Prevention & Partnerships, Children's Services), Stuart Riddle (Senior Manager, Design and Development, Children's Services), Ed Denham (Manager, Design and Development, Children's Services), Paul Scothern (Manager Design and Development, Children's Services) and David Northover (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

**Election of Chairman**

- 8 **Resolved**  
That Councillor Kate Wheller be elected Chairman of the Panel for the remained of the year 2017/18.

**Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

- 9 **Resolved**  
That Councillor Susan Jefferies be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of 2017/18.

**Apologies for Absence**

- 10 An apology was received from Councillor David Shortell.

**Code of Conduct**

- 11 There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

**Terms of Reference**

- 12 The Panel's Terms of Reference were noted. Councillor Steve Butler and the Corporate Director for Children's Services and Adult and Community Services, Sara Tough, explained the background to the Panel, how it had operated previously and what it was designed to achieved.

**Minutes**

- 13 The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2017 were confirmed and signed.

**Transforming Youth Services in Dorset**

- 14 The Panel were given an overview of the recent changes made to youth services across Dorset and how the work that had been undertaken had improved access to services, delivering higher standards of provision at a reduced cost.

Significant changes had been made to asset management and several contractual agreements had been renegotiated to deliver significant savings whilst ensuring public spaces were being used in the best way.

Formal youth service arrangements were being provided as well as other, more informal provision organised by various groups. The Panel emphasised the importance of publicising activities to enable increased access to provision. It was noted that councillors should be informed of provision in their local areas to help advertise within the community.

Whilst understanding the need to make cost savings the panel felt that services provided should not be compromised and that focussing on investment in young people's futures should remain a priority. Clarification was provided as to how the £200K total savings were being utilised and/or carried over to subsequent financial years and what assurances had been given for how this would be used.

The Panel felt that an improved understanding of funding bids was required to ensure that available funds were being accessed. Officers explained that there were now fewer restrictions around the process and a Crowdfunder toolkit was available to help users fully understand the options available to them. Assurances were given that access to the toolkit would be drawn to the attention of all members. Guidance videos were available on YouTube which detailed the process.

The Panel felt that there should be the opportunity for small bodies contributing to the delivery of youth services to be able to access a 'start up' contribution. It was considered that £1000 would not significantly affect the savings being made and would leave £100k to be reclaimed as savings. The Panel felt that such an amount would be invaluable to an organisation's ability to get their project started. Each request would be assessed on its merit based on what it was likely to achieve and predicted success rates. Whilst this was seen as a helpful way forward, the Panel were reminded that there were alternative means by which fundraising contributions could be recognised.

Accordingly it was recommended that in principle, a sum of £1000 per group should be made available and it was left to officers to commission and scope this.

### **Recommended**

That a sum of £1000 should be made available to each youth service provider applicant to be used to start up their particular project and access low token items, with it being left to officers to commission and scope how this would be done.

## **Home to School Transport Policy**

15 The Panel considered a report on the Home to School Transport Policy which outlined the eligibility criteria for entitlement to transport support.

It was explained that in Swanage, Dorchester and Verwood the Secondary/Upper school arena shared catchments which included free schools and academies. The implications of this arrangement were explained. Budgetary considerations played a significant part in how the policy was applied. How the In Year Fair Access process was applied was also explained and the implications this had on the policy.

Potential changes with regard to the academy on Portland would have implications for the County Council in relation to its transport duty. How the Portland sites and physical resources were proposed to be used in future and the reasons for why this was the case were explained.

The Swanage School had challenged the Home to School Transport Policy. The

school felt that it was being disadvantaged by the way the policy was being applied in preference to the other LEA schools in the area. Legal clarification suggested that the Swanage School had a case. Consequently, there was a need for the issue to be addressed as reasonably as possible so that parity could be established. Whilst Swanage School was a free school, as one of the family of schools in Dorset, the County Council still had an obligation to ensure that its pupils were served satisfactorily in education and safeguarding terms. However, the Panel was conscious that whatever solution was found to satisfy the needs of The Swanage School, it could have consequences for how home to school transport provision was delivered for other schools across the county. It was agreed that negotiations as to how discretion was applied to ensure that the integrity of the policy remained. However, officers remained confident that this issue could be addressed to the satisfaction of all parties.

Similarly The Dorset Studio School wanted a clearly defined catchment area. At present, The Thomas Hardy School catchment applied. Clearly there were implications for any change to a catchment area in that geographical area.

For Verwood, there was an option of close association with the Ferndown Upper schools. Officers considered that the practicalities of what was being proposed to be done would result in savings being achieved.

It was important that children did not need to have to travel unduly or unnecessarily and that, wherever possible, the nearest school to them met all their educational needs. However, it was acknowledged that in practice this could not always be the case. In those circumstances the most practicable solution was sought to address the needs of the individual and the county council alike.

It was acknowledged that every school should be successful and viable. In understanding the practical implications for how the policy would be applied and the consequences of this being tailored to meet individual circumstances, it was considered that arrangements should be put in place to seek a solution for those outstanding anomalies. It was suggested that an officer/member group be established to give this further consideration and understand the issues at hand.

### **Recommended**

That a member/officer group be established to give further consideration to how the Home to School Transport Provision Policy might be best applied, so as to understand the issues at hand and assist in consolidating the strategic direction being taken.

### **Future Work Programme**

- 16 The Panel considered that in addition to the issues outlined on the agenda for their future consideration, their next meeting should explain what Forward Together for Children's Services entailed for the benefit of the new members on the Panel so that they might better understand what their role was.

### **Future Meeting Dates**

- 17 The next meeting of the Panel would be arranged towards the end of October.

Meeting Duration: 2.00 pm - 4.20 pm