

Nottingham City Council

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at LB 31/32, Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 9 June 2022 from 10.06 am - 11.52 am

Membership

Present

Councillor Carole McCulloch (Chair)
Councillor AJ Matsiko
Councillor Georgia Power
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos

Absent

Councillor Maria Joannou
Councillor Phil Jackson
Councillor Nayab Patel
Councillor Maria Watson

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Councillor Cheryl Barnard - Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools
Ailsa Barr - Director of Children's Integrated Services
Jane Garrard - Constitutional Services
David Johns - Public Health Consultant
Catherine Underwood - Corporate Director for People
Jane Garrard - Senior Governance Officer
Phil Wye - Governance Officer

1 Apologies for absence

Councillor Phil Jackson – personal reasons
Councillor Maria Joannou – other council business
Councillor Nayab Patel – personal reasons
Councillor Maria Watson - leave

2 Appointment of Vice Chair

Resolved to appoint Councillor Maria Joannou as Vice-Chair of this Committee for this municipal year (May 2022 to April 2023).

3 Declarations of Interests

None.

4 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2022 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

5 Implementation of agreed budget savings relating to Children's Integrated Services

Councillor Cheryl Barnard and Catherine Underwood introduced the report setting out the current position in delivering each of the agreed budget savings for 2022/23, the most significant of which relate to Children's Centres and the Play and Youth Service.

Ailsa Barr, Director of Children's Integrated Services, provided an update on the proposed closure of five Children's Centres. She confirmed that progress is on track to achieve associated budget savings, while continuing to deliver a service across the City. In response to questions from the Committee and in the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- (a) The five Children's Centres proposed for closure are presently being offered to lease to organisations via a robust Expression of Interest process which is weighted around the financial sustainability of those organisations interested. Expressions of Interest have been received for five of the Centres and these will be evaluated and decisions made in July.
- (b) The opportunity to lease the Centres was highlighted as part of the consultation process so that the information was all in one place. Some Committee members raised concern that this may mean that some community groups may not have seen the information and therefore missed opportunities to raise expressions of interest. They commented on the importance of promoting such opportunities far and wide and suggested that there could have been a role for ward councillors in engaging local organisations that may have been interested and facilitating discussions about what could be possible locally.
- (c) One of the most prominent concerns raised in the consultation was about local childcare availability. However, a number of the groups that have made expressions of interest in leasing the centres are childcare providers.
- (d) An interim arrangement will be in place over the summer and transition to the new model will be managed through existing links with partners, which are strong. Centres will be talking with families and professionals, advertising the new offer. There will continue to be a service in all areas of the City as the new model is to have hubs for staff to be based on and then go out to visit other areas.
- (e) The new model of delivery will be supported by a new Early Help Strategy, which is being developed by the Children's Partnership.
- (f) In response to concern raised by some Committee members about the new model of delivery being appropriately targeted to ensure a reach to the most vulnerable and in need of support and that the service is able to adequately meet the level of demand, which may change, the Committee was assured that data on demand and the level of need will be closely monitored through, for example, a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- (g) Voluntary sector services can refer families for help, if they have the parent's consent. The Designated Safeguarding Leads Network works across the city to discuss this and share knowledge. There are also universal services for children in the city and within this there are pathways to access additional support if necessary.

- (h) The MacAlister Report has recommended more funding for Early Help Services. However, this will not necessarily mean the Children's Centres can reopen.

Ailsa Barr, Director of Children's Integrated Services, provided an update on the delivery of budget savings relating to Play and Youth Services. She reported that progress is on track to achieve the budget savings, a new team is being put in place and the new service is currently in the creation phase. In response to questions from the Committee and in the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- (i) Additional funding has been agreed to retain three more worker posts than originally proposed. As the nature of roles within the team has changed, not all posts have been filled by existing staff and interviews are currently taking place to fill the vacancies.
- (j) A reduced service is being run currently for the most vulnerable, and signposting is given to additional support available with other agencies and voluntary groups. The service will need to work more closely with partners, such as the Police and NHS to deliver services. Some Committee members raised concern that services provided by other organisations may also be affected by financial pressures, or other changes affected those organisations, and this could leave gaps in provision. If there are no groups available then provision of service will be looked at. The Director accepted that this could be a challenge, although the Council was limited as to what it could do to address this but assured the Committee that for situations where there is no service/ support to refer or signpost to, consideration will be given as to what else can be put in place locally.
- (k) Working closely with the community and parents will also be very important, and there is potential for them to be supported to run some services themselves.
- (l) The new Youth Workers will be looking at the offer of services across the city to make sure there is not duplication, and that there is a regular offer of sessions.

Resolved to

- (1) recommend that consideration is given to extending the period during which Expressions of Interest for use of vacant Children's Centres and Youth Centres can be made to enable wider publicity about the opportunities available, including utilising the knowledge of ward councillors and Neighbourhood Services, to ensure that there are no missed opportunities for local delivery of local services;**
- (2) request written briefing is provided to Committee members about the outcomes of the Expression of Interest process for operating from vacant Children's Centres and Youth Centres; and**
- (3) review how the new arrangements for Children's Centres and the Youth and Play Services are working, and the impacts of changes in March.**

6 Family Hubs

David Johns, Consultant in Public Health, delivered a presentation to the Committee about the concept of family hubs and the opportunities that it presents for the City. He highlighted the following information:

- (a) The Government has committed to championing Family Hubs, a system-wide model of providing high-quality, joined-up, whole-family support services through a child's early years until they reach the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).
- (b) Nottingham City Council is eligible to apply for a share of funding, and has already been working with the Government on expectations around this. The hubs are likely to include many services that are already run, but delivered in different ways such as online.

In response to questions from the Committee and in the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- (c) Some Committee members commented that many families in the more deprived areas of Nottingham do not have easy access to the internet, so services will need to be flexible to ensure that issues with digital access are taken into account and those most in need of support are able to access it.
- (d) Services for refugees and asylum seekers should be included such as language support, and the offer must be culturally appropriate.
- (e) Partnership working will be important to make sure that the funding goes as far as possible.

Resolved to:

- (1) recommend that the development of a family hub approach includes a culturally appropriate offer for all communities in the City; and**
- (2) recommend that the Council works with partners, such as those in the Integrated Care System, to ensure the model that is developed is as sustainable as possible given that funding is only available for three years.**

7 Work Programme

Resolved to note the work that is currently planned for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.

8 Future meeting dates

Resolved to meet on the following Thursdays at 10am:

- **28 July 2022**
- **3 November 2022**
- **1 December 2022**
- **26 January 2023**
- **30 March 2023**

