

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**9 MARCH 2016**

### **PRESENT**

Councillor J. Coupe (in the Chair).

Councillors M. Cordingley (Vice-Chairman), S.K. Anstee, R. Bowker, C. Candish, D. Hopps, D. Western and J. Lloyd (ex-Officio)

#### Also Present

Cllr M. Hyman - Executive Member for Children's Services  
Cllr K. Procter - Shadow Lead Member for Safeguarding

#### In attendance

Jill Colbert - Acting Corporate Director, Children, Families & Wellbeing  
Cathy Rooney - Acting Joint Director - Children's Social Care  
Habib Khan - Head of Legal Services  
Gerard Crowther - Head of Service - Children in Care  
Elaina Quesada - Head of Service - Commissioning - Early Help and Personalisation  
Chris Gaffey - Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Boyes, K. Carter, L. Dagnall and Mrs. P. Dixon

### **34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interests were made by Members.

### **35. CALL IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION: E/22.02.16/6 - REVIEW OF IN-HOUSE CHILDREN'S HOMES**

The Committee had been called to consider a call in of Executive decision number E/22.02.16/6 in respect of the Review of In-House Children's Homes, considered at a meeting on 22 February 2016.

The call-in had been submitted by Councillors Carter, Cordingley, Dagnall, Lloyd and D. Western, and was based on the grounds that insufficient information was available to make the decision. The Chairman had permitted consideration of the request to explore the issues raised.

The Chairman set out the scope of the proceedings and the options available to the Committee. The Committee could request that the Executive give further consideration to its decision, but could not overturn the decision.

The Committee had received the initial report and supporting documentation to the Executive, the decision notice, the call-in proforma, and a supplementary report of the Executive Member for Children's Services. The report set out a detailed response to the points set out in the call-in request. The Executive Member for Children's Services, the Acting Corporate Director, Children, Families and

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Wellbeing, and Officers from the Directorate were in attendance to respond to the Committee's enquiries.

Members raised their concerns about whether there would be sufficient capacity to cope with a future rise in demand for in-house placements if Fairview were closed. The Executive Member for Children's Services and the Officers present advised Members of the intention to place children in family based placements wherever possible going forward, reducing the need for the use of in-house children's homes. In the event where a child would need to be placed in-house as a last resort, sufficient capacity would be available elsewhere in the borough.

Members commented on the lack of data in the initial report. Officers assured Scrutiny Members that weekly meetings were held to monitor capacity for children's placements and fed back to the Acting Corporate Director. This data, although not included in the initial report, had been considered as part of the decision.

Concerns were raised about the quality of care provided for children who would be homed elsewhere following the closure of Fairview. Officers advised that facilities for children under the age of 16 were regulated by Ofsted, and Trafford had a framework in place to ensure children were only housed in facilities rated as good or outstanding. Quality assurance processes were in place, including follow up visits to ensure these processes were robust. Regrettably, facilities for over 16s were not regulated in the same way, and would be out of Local Authority control.

Members were concerned that the prospect of job losses had not been adequately considered in the Executive Decision Report. Members paid tribute to the staff who had done an excellent job at the facility, a view that was shared by the Executive Member for Children's Services and the Officers present. It was confirmed that the Directorate were actively searching for relevant positions for the staff currently at Fairview to ensure that their skills were retained. Two members of staff had already shown interest in other available positions, and it was hoped that the closure would not result in any job losses.

Discussions took place surrounding the initial report's claim that the closure of Fairview would achieve a total annual saving of £551,140, which seemed to not take into account other costs which could be incurred following the closure of Fairview. The Acting Corporate Director, Children, Families and Wellbeing welcomed this feedback, and agreed that the report could have presented the savings figures in more detail, taking into account the complexity of the situation.

Officers advised Members of the large amount of in depth research available on the outcomes that could be expected when pursuing the strategy of placing children in family based placements wherever possible, and would be happy to share this with the Committee.

The Executive Member for Children's Services and the Officers present welcomed the Scrutiny Committee's feedback, and hoped the information presented at the meeting alleviated any concerns that Committee Members might have had.

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Members of the Scrutiny Committee were requested to decide on whether, in the light of the information set out in the report and the discussion at the meeting, the decision should be referred back to the Executive for further consideration.

RESOLVED: That the Committee feel that the concerns raised in the call-in request have been adequately dealt with and that no further action be taken.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 7.55 pm