

## **Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Education, Skills and Employment**

At 9.30 am on Wednesday 30th June, 2021 in the

Held as Remote access via Zoom

### **Present:-**

#### Members

Councillor Scott Edwards (Chair)  
Councillor Wendy Brackenbury  
Councillor Leanne Buckingham  
Councillor Annabel de Capell Brooke

Councillor Dorothy Maxwell  
Councillor Lee Wilkes

#### Officers

Cathi Hadley – Executive Director,  
Children’s Services  
Ben Smith – Democratic Services

Carol Berrevoets – Adult Learning

### **1 Apologies for non-attendance**

Apologies were received from Councillor Phillip Irwin.

### **2 Members' Declarations of Interests**

There were none.

### **3 Notification of requests to address the meeting**

None received.

### **4 To discuss the terms of reference of the Executive Advisory Panel for Education, Skills and Employment**

The Director of Children’s Services, Cathi Hadley, introduced the draft terms of reference, stating at the moment they described the structure of meetings and process for all five of the Advisory Panels. It was for those present to agree their expectations of the specific Education, Skills and Employment area so that it could be incorporated into the terms of reference.

It was noted that the principal function of the Executive Advisory Panel would be that of supporting policy development within the policy areas of Education, Skills and Employment. The Panel would also be asked to comment on reports relating to that area that were to be considered by the Executive.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- 1) The Education Skills and Employment Advisory Panel notes its terms of reference; and**

- 2) **That the Executive Director of Education be requested to bring suggestions for specific wording around their area of policy to the next meeting.**

## **5 Overview of Education, Skills and Employment (Presentation)**

At the Chair's invitation, Director of Children's Services, Cathi Hadley gave a presentation highlighting the following:

- The services that sat within the learning skills and education service;
- Vulnerable children and areas of help to them that came within the purview of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust.
- SEND, early education and childcare and learning and effectiveness.
- High needs funding included sensory impairment, specialist support services and the educational psychologist service.
- Early education and childcare, including the early years and improvement team that worked with nurseries and the business support services that worked with families and providers.
- Within Education and improvement was the virtual school. It looked after looked after children and those in care. The North had lead responsibility for it for both the North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council.
- Safeguarding was everyone's business and was high on the agenda. The authority ensured placements were offered that families and carers required.
- Strategic schools planning.
- Specialist support in sensory impairment

Following the presentation, the following comments were noted:

- A copy of the slides would be provided to all members of the Board following the meeting.
- Figures could be provided for the children in the virtual school and for those schools who required improvement.
- A snapshot would be provided on where they were with school effectiveness and attendance at the virtual school.
- The information would be shown and then the Board would be taken through the areas. Some of the reports would be in specific areas. All reports coming into Council would come through this panel first.

**RESOLVED that: The Education Skills and Employment Advisory Board noted the presentation on the overview of Education Skills and Employment.**

## **6 Key areas of focus from each of the service areas across Education, Skills and Employment (Presentation)**

At the Chair's invitation the Assistant Director for Children, Anne-Marie Dobbs Introduced a presentation stating the following:

- North Northamptonshire encompassed 142 schools and 62 early years providers.
- A number of pupils were registered as high needs but not specialist provision.
- There were 2,500 pupils with an educational health plan and the virtual school were working with 1,020 pupils.

- Key areas of focus were special educational needs, prevalence of speech and language skills. They were expecting an increase on needs.
- They worked with the Department of Education in terms of improvement. They needed to have an impact on single academy trusts and that work was different to that provided with the maintained schools. They had to work more collegiately with academies which had some system wide challenges.
- There was a demand for children with educational needs but only a limited resource to meet them. Central Government decided how they could provide services. Nationally 200 was a recognised caseload but the North of the county had 400. So one challenge was where to put resource.
- How they worked was another challenge.
- There was an overspend on the high needs block so there was a pressure on the schools' forum. Northamptonshire's picture was more favourable than others but this was a national issue.
- The demand on healthcare plans was rising but the budget was not rising with the demand. The department was therefore considering how they might work differently with these children. Provision of therapy health services was one of the issues they had considered managing across the partnership. Strong partnerships and effective intervention was required from their health partners.
- There would be a SEND inspection from Ofsted forthcoming, which was expected this to take place in the Spring of 2022. The Authority would not receive a judgement in the same way as social care but a statement of action. There was a new SEND strategy and framework.
- There was a need to change their relationships with academies which were independent of the local authority, but which was still responsible for ensuring they had capable provision. The Department aimed to become an equal partner with those schools.
- There was also a need to improve on Children's Social Care. There was a need to improve on brokering support. The Local Authority would look to the sector to tell them what they did well.
- Services provided to schools for free would be reviewed.
- There was also a need to consider alternative provision for those schools that could not educate their children. A single provider did not meet all of the needs of the children so there was a need to look at the cost of it and obtain alternative providers. They wished to provide more sympathetic provision for children.

Queries on the presentation were answered as follows:

- The flow of individual practitioners in terms of education healthcare plans was not unique to North Northamptonshire. The department was providing the resource and also doing some work that was not statutory. Some of the services could be provided elsewhere in the Services. There was also the need to consider those pupils without an educational healthcare plan to ensure those who required additional support were receiving support in the correct manner to ensure all needs were met.
- The virtual school also provided duties around any child who had a social worker.
- They would not be providing to children aged 0-2 years. That would be managed largely by colleagues in the Northamptonshire Children's Trust. They undertook a lot of work with the early years' settings. They also worked with childminders and others in the sector to ensure children's needs were met.

- The SEND Board had met with partners across the system so they could understand how effective the work was.
- With many early years' settings being lost the opportunity to work with the children earlier had reduced and that increased the SEND need at a later date.
- A full review of higher needs funding was required particularly as having spoken to headteachers it appeared the higher needs funding wasn't working so well. It was difficult to be able to fund a school in September for those children they hadn't yet received but there were ideas in the system for how it could work better. One of these was that whilst the funding panel was chaired by a local officer from a local authority the panel was made up of teachers in the area. So a group of professionals would get together to discuss how they challenged the issues and start to learn from each other how they might approach the issues in the future.
- The Assistant Director for Children had discussed with colleagues the best way to ensure funding was provided to schools to support children and ensure they did not miss out.

**RESOLVED that: the Education, Skills and Employment Advisory Panel noted the presentation on key areas of focus from each of the service areas across Education and Employment.**

## **7 Forthcoming Executive papers for 15 July 2021**

At the Chairman's invitation the Director of Children's Services, Cathi Hadley, stated that as far as she was aware everything was on the forward plan.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, Ben Smith confirmed that there were no Panel relevant papers due to be presented at the Executive meeting on 15 July 2021 but the next forward plan would be issued the following week and there were some things to be added for the August meeting. The next meeting of this was due to take place on 28 July 2021 so there was time to discuss any items for the August meeting.

Councillor Scott Edwards stated a need to change the times of this meeting as the Director of Children's Services had other commitments that clashed and another member of the Panel was teaching during school time.

**RESOLVED that: The times of the meeting would be amended to better fit around diaries.**

## **8 Discussion on developing the forward plan for the Executive Advisory Panel**

The Chair reported that as he had weekly updates with the Director of Children's Services so he could always discuss anything members e-mailed him about with the Director and get it on to the forward plan.

The Chair also informed the Panel that he had spoken with the lead member for Health as some things would overlap between this Panel and the Health panel and ideas would be brought to the Committee once these discussions had concluded.

In answer to queries the following was confirmed:

- It had been announced the day before that Central Government would be providing funding during the summer holidays for those children who currently

- claimed free school meals. After that they would have to consider where the money came from if it was provided because it had not been available prior to the COVID pandemic.
- There was a programme known as the holiday activity and food fund. It would be managed during the summer and would provide free places for those on free school meals to access various activity schemes and health and wellbeing activities. There were also leaflets with recipes. These had been well attended at Easter and there was adequate funding to provide 4 weeks' worth of activities during the summer.
  - An e-mail of how people could access summer activities and the funding for them would be forwarded to members of the Panel.

**RESOLVED that: The Education, Skills and Employment Advisory Panel note that:**

- 1) Ideas on Health discussions would be brought to a later Panel meeting once the Chair has discussed them with the lead member for Health to ascertain what would cross over between this Panel and the one concerned with Health; and**
- 2) That an e-mail giving details of how people who currently claimed free school meals could access funding and summer activities would be circulated to members following the meeting.**

## **9 Close of Meeting**

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting.

---

Chair

---

Date

The meeting closed at 10.35 am