

NORTH EAST (OUTER) AREA COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 6TH MARCH, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor G Wilkinson in the Chair

Councillors A Castle, D Cohen, A Lamb,
J Procter and M Robinson

75 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the Special Meeting of the North East (Outer) Area Committee.

76 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors N Buckley, P Harrand and R Procter.

77 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary and other interests declared at the meeting.

78 Children's Services - School Cluster Funding/Youth Service Review

Referring to Minute 67 of the meeting held on 4th February 2013, the East North East Area Leader submitted a report on cluster funding and the Youth Service Review.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:-

- Briefing Note on Cluster Funding 2011/12 and 2012/13 (Appendix A refers)
- Youth Service Review Update – Excerpt from Area Chair's minutes 13th July 2012 (Appendix B refers)
- Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) – Youth Services – Working Group meeting held on 18th October 2012 (Appendix C refers)
- Children's Services Finance team – Top sliced funding from the dedicated schools grant for EPOS schools and how much was then given to EPOS clusters (Appendix D refers)
- Cluster funding options 2013/14 to 2015/16 (Appendix E refers)

The following representatives were in attendance:-

- Mr Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Mr Paul Brennan, Deputy Director of Children's Services (Learning, Skills and Universal Services), Children's Services

The Chair invited specific questions and points of clarification from Members in relation to cluster funding and the decision making process undertaken to date.

In summary, specific reference was made to the following issues:-

- Concerns about the delay in bringing this important issue to the Area Committee and clarification as to why the Director of Children's Services was not in attendance at the meeting on 4th February 2013
- Clarification sought of how the dedicated Schools Grant works in relation to cluster funding
- Clarification sought of the history of decision making processes undertaken to date
- Concerns that the recommendations proposed by the Schools Forum would unfairly disadvantage children within the North East Outer ward
- Clarification sought as to whether the report to the Schools Forum in January presented options, or a specific recommendation for cluster funding formula
- Clarification sought as to the role and function of the schools forum and its relationship to the local authority and democratic decision-making processes. This included understanding the opportunity for Elected Members to make representation prior to the Director of Children's Services' decision appearing on the Council's Forward Plan
(The Director of Children's Services agreed to seek further advice on this issue with a report back to the East North East Area Leader for dissemination to Members of the Area Committee)
- Clarification that all parties have a clear understanding of the decision making powers and responsibilities at each stage in allocating the formula
- Clarification of the membership of the Schools Forum
(The Director of Children's Services agreed to circulate a copy of the current Schools Forum membership to the East North East Area Leader for dissemination to Members of the Area Committee)
- Clarification of when the financial year started for schools and the implications of any delay in distributing the funding after this point
- Clarification of whether the Director of Children's Services report on this issue was on the Council's Forward Plan
(The Director of Children's Services agreed to seek clarification from the Corporate Governance Team on this issue with a report back to the East North East Area Leader for dissemination to Members of the Area Committee)

The Director of Children's Services responded to the comments made by Members and in summary made specific reference to the following issues:-

- That the Director of Children's Services delegated decision on cluster funding was subject to the regular decision-making rules and processes of the Council
- That the Schools Forum had voted by 21 votes to one on a three year formula around cluster funding. As part of this the forum had been clear that transparent cluster governance and performance review mechanisms be implemented to monitor the use of the funding

- That the cluster funding approach is in line with the broader strategy for devolving decision making and funding to a local level, which has been endorsed through Executive Board and Full Council and which supports efforts to target support to families who are most vulnerable. The Children's Trust Board, Chaired by the Executive Member for Children's Services also maintains an overview of cluster's overall impact and effectiveness

In conclusion, the Chair invited comments from Members of the Area Committee on the way forward.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- b) That this Committee:
 - i) expresses its concerns and requires clarity about the decision making process undertaken to date in relation to cluster funding.
 - ii) requests that the East North East Area Leader refer this issue to the relevant Scrutiny Board or Executive Board for consideration.

79 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 18th March 2013 at 6.00pm at Treetops Community Centre, Squirrel Way, Moortown, Leeds 17.

(The meeting concluded at 4.50pm)