

ACHIEVING FOR CHILDREN JOINT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 11 JULY 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Natasha Airey, Simon Dudley, David Evans, Penny Frost, Liz Green, Jo Humphreys and Diane White

Also in attendance: Alison Alexander, David Archibald, Elizabeth Brandill-Pepper, Ian Dodds, Hilary Hall, Rob Henderson, Kirsty Hogg, Sarah Ireland, Paul Martin, Kevin McDaniel and Mandy Skinner

Clerk: Shilpa Manek

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gareth Roberts and Roy Thompson. Sarah Ireland was attending on behalf of Roy Thompson.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

The minutes from the meeting on 14 March 2018 were Unanimously agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No questions received.

APPOINTMENT OF A NEW AFC CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Committee thanked Nick Whitfield for all his hard work.

Councillor Liz Green suggested a discussion was required about the Chief Executive role for AfC. The previous Chief Executive had been very outward facing, working three days a week for AfC and assisting other local authorities mainly at the request of the Department for Education.

Councillor Liz Green asked if there was an appetite for a highly paid role of a chief executive or managing director or could the role be consumed within the roles of current directors.

The Joint Committee agreed that the focus should be on the delivery for our residents and the saving made could be used directly back into operations.

Councillor Liz Green suggested that AfC work on a new model and what it might look like and bring a report to a future meeting. Whilst the model was being worked on, the current interim chief executive, Ian Dodds agreed to remain in post at no additional cost to AfC.

RESOLVED: The Joint Committee instructed the AfC Board to develop a proposal for a new leadership structure without the role of Chief Executive. Ian Dodds, the current interim Chief Executive would remain in post as acting head at no cost to AfC.

ACTION: Proposal for a new AfC senior leadership structure to be presented at the next meeting.

2018-2019 AFC BUSINESS PLAN AND MFTP INTERIM

Ian Dodds, gave a summary of the business plan and highlighted the four priority areas:

- a. Building resilience so that families and communities are better able to help, support and protect children without the need for statutory interventions.
- b. Creating local provision so that children and young people can stay closer to their families and support networks, and benefit from integrated services.
- c. Developing more inclusive services and opportunities for children and young people with disabilities, complex needs and challenging behaviours.
- d. Supporting children and young people to develop their independence and skills for adulthood.

Ian Dodds explained that some of the RBWM data was missing but it had now been added and also that the report did not have phased financial phasing, which would be added to the report. An updated version would be recirculated to all.

ACTION: Recirculate Interim 2018/19 Business Plan

Councillor Evans felt that the savings in the report were too ambitious and asked how robust the savings were and whether they were achievable. Ian Dodds informed the Committee that there were clear calculations for all savings. These would be better illustrated when all the phased figures were in the report.

Councillor Airey informed the Committee that an LGA report on children's services expenditure had been published and Ian Dodds informed the Committee that AfC would be using the new formulae across the local authorities. Councillor Dudley asked how many FTE staff there were and who looked after the HR for AfC. Ian Dodds informed the Committee that there were 1126 FTE staff and Kingston HR looked after Richmond and Kingston based staff and RBWM HR looked after Windsor and Maidenhead based staff. A new HR model was currently at business case stage with proposed implementation from April 2019.

Councillor David Evans asked about the increase in numbers of education, health and care plans (EHCPs) and was advised that nationally funding for children with SEN was not sufficient. Factors which contributed to the increase included early diagnosis, children with more complex needs, reduced infant mortality, and the attractiveness of the local offer to parents of children with SEN. Due to the implementation of the SEND reforms (2014), the cohort had been increased from those 5-19 years to 0-25 years. The unsustainable financial challenge for schools and local authorities was discussed and the need for ongoing lobbying of Government stressed.

RESOLVED: The Joint Committee unanimously agreed that the three Leaders would write to the Prime Minister to highlight the evidenced financial pressure of educating children with special educational needs within the current dedicated schools block funding allocation. Leaders would also detail their support for AfC to be able to open local free schools in order to allow more children with special education needs to be educated locally.

RESOLVED: The Joint Committee approved the interim business plan for 2018/19 and noted that a three-year plan would be developed for 2019-2022 to reflect the outcome of the Councils' agreed position, as owners, on the future direction and strategy of the company.

SUMMARY OF RESERVED MATTERS TAKEN BY CHIEF EXECUTIVES DURING THE YEAR

Ian Dodds introduced this item, explaining that decisions had been made on two reserved matters since the last Joint Committee, both in Band 3. The first was reserved matter 12: to appoint or remove any auditor of the company – Grant Thornton UK LLP were appointed as the company's external auditor from 2018/19 to 2020/2021. This followed an external procurement exercise and the decision was made at the General Meeting of the company on 21 June 2018. The second was reserved matter 17: to appoint or remove any Director of the company – Sarah Ireland was appointed as a Director representing the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, replacing Anne Redparth who had been removed as a Director. This decision was made at a General Meeting of the company on 30 April 2018.

RESOLVED: The Joint Committee noted and formally recorded the reserved matter decisions that had been taken by the member councils, as joint owners of Achieving for Children, since the Committee's last meeting on 14 March 2018.

Councillor Dudley suggested that the Reserved Matters structure be revisited. Currently, the Royal Borough only had 20% consideration in the partnership, which was, appropriately, based on the company moving to secure two further members within the short timescale and then the percentage consideration would have changed accordingly. The current 20% meant that the Royal Borough was effectively disenfranchised from any Band 2 decisions based on the 75% threshold. Whilst this was understandable at the time of transfer and the anticipated growth at that time, it was not acceptable now if the expansion was deferred. The Royal Borough would like the threshold for Band 2 decisions moved to 80%.

AUDITED AFC ACCOUNTS 2017-8

David Archibald, Chairman of the AfC Board, informed the Joint Committee that the Audited AfC accounts had been agreed and signed. They were for noting only.

RESOLVED: The Joint Committee noted the Audited Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for Achieving for Children for 2017/18.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Members noted the date of the next meeting: Wednesday 14 November 2018 at 11am at Richmond.

The March 2019 meeting would now be a daytime meeting starting at 11am at Kingston.

The meeting, which began at 11.30 am, finished at 12.15 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....