



## **CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL**

**12<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 4.30pm**

### **Present:**

Councillor Silvester (in the Chair)

Councillors Boyd, Cairns, Clough, Farren, Holland (Substitute for Downes), Patrick, Parkinson (substitute for Lindley), K. Swinburn and Wheatley

Co-opted Members: Canon Ian Robinson (Church of England)

### **Officers in attendance:**

- Paul Cowling (Service Director – Regulated Services)
- Karen Linton (Deputy Service Director – Skills, Employability and Education Transport)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer))
- Bev O'Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Mary Ryan (Head of Commissioning Services – Children)

### **Others in attendance:**

- Councillor Cracknell (Portfolio Holder for Children and Education)

There was one member of the public present for this meeting.

### **SPCLL.46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Downes and Lindley for this meeting.

### **SPCLL.47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received in respect of any item on the agenda for this meeting.

## **SPCLL.48 NEW FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROVISION OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT**

The panel received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education seeking approval to procure a new contract arrangement for Home to School Transport.

Members asked for clarification on the length of the contract and the framework length. Officers informed Members that each contract that was awarded would run for about two years, the costing in the report included inflation costs and when applied for Officers would know the length of time the providers were bidding for.

One Councillor raised the costs of using taxis and wondered if Officers were making sure they were not paying over the odds and getting good value for money. Ms Ryan stated that they had an idea of the standard price per mile and benchmarked against this. However, they did have to take into account passenger assistants where needed, so costings may vary as this would be based on that person's salary.

A Member was concerned on the time this may take to put in place. They wondered if providers were aware of this consultation taking place. Ms Ryan explained that they had consulted with providers already and had made sure the process to reapply was clear for them. She added that once the framework was completed it would give them something to compare the service to. She added that due diligence was done annually and parents were able to raise any concerns at any time.

Members acknowledged the need for the new framework and were happy to support the recommendations within the Cabinet report.

RESOLVED – That the recommendation's included within the Cabinet report be supported.

## **SPCLL.49 PROCUREMENT OF UNREGISTERED ALTERNATIVE PROVISION FRAMEWORK**

The panel received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education seeking approval to procure the establishment of a formal commissioning arrangement for unregistered alternative provision for children and young people with SEND in North East Lincolnshire.

Members queried the new standard that was being introduced, they wondered whether it would be set against Ofsted standards or the council's. Ms Ryan explained that this new standard would allow them to note what the council expected from the service and set a higher benchmark than we currently had. One Member had concerns that there wouldn't be enough oversight on what the services were providing. Ms Ryan stated that currently there were only basic due diligence checks in place and we needed more information on the provision that was offered.

This framework would ask for more than due diligence checks, it would allow them to filter out the organisations that weren't up to the standard they expected.

Members then went on to discuss children and young people who were not in any alternative provision. They wondered if this framework would help with that. Ms Ryan confirmed that this framework would give them a better oversight of what would be provided so it may identify that some of our organisations would be a better fit for the children and young people that were currently not in a placement.

Members also asked if this would give organisations the opportunity to subcontract the service out to other providers. Ms Ryan confirmed that it wouldn't. The panel felt strongly that it would be in the child's best interest if this wasn't to happen. Councillor Holland proposed that the framework terms prohibit subcontracting by providers. Councillor Clough seconded this. The proposed was supported unanimously by the panel.

Members then went on to discuss the location of these provisions. Ms Ryan explained that their main priority was to get children and young people placed within North East Lincolnshire, but where services were better provided elsewhere for the child's needs then this would have to take precedence. Councillor Boyd proposed that where possible, the Alternative Provision placements were made within North East Lincolnshire. Councillor Silvester second this. The proposed was supported unanimously by the panel.

#### RECOMMENDED TO CABINET –

That the recommendations included in the report be supported, alongside the additional recommendations of:

1. That the framework terms prohibit subcontracting by providers.
2. That, where possible, the Alternative Provision placements were made within North East Lincolnshire.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 5.10 p.m.