

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2017**

**MINUTE – PROPOSALS TO CONSULT ON REMOVAL (CLOSURE) OF
RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES AT MAPLEWELL HALL SPECIAL SCHOOL**

The Committee considered the following documents which had been submitted in relation to this agenda item:-

- a report of the Director of Children and Family Services, marked 'Agenda Item 10', concerning the proposals for removal (closure) of the residential facilities at Maplewell Hall School with effect from September 2018;
- A statement from the Lead Petitioner, Kayti Ryan;
- A statement on behalf of Maplewell Hall School from Kirsty North, Care and Intervention Team Leader; and
- The consultation document 'Have your say on the proposed closure of the residential facilities at Maplewell Hall School'.

A copy of the documents listed above is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the following people who attended to speak on this item:

- Kayti Ryan, the Lead Petitioner
- Kirsty North, Care and Intervention Team Leader at Maplewell Hall School.

In introducing the report the Director emphasised:-

- 37% of the school population used the residential facility at Maplewell Hall School; none of the children had a requirement for residential provision detailed in their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
- The funding allocated to the school totalled £293,000 per annum to support the residential provision; and
- There was a need for equity and fairness in how the funding from the High Needs Block was allocated. Funding should be allocated according to the assessed need with priority being given to those with the highest need.

252 responses to the consultation had been received. These showed a clear disagreement with the proposals and provided a rich picture of why the provision was valued by children, young people and their families as it helped the children and young people to develop their independence and social skills and, through providing respite care, improved the quality of family life.

The Chairman invited Mrs Taylor CC, local Member to speak.

Mrs Taylor expressed concern that the report proposed closure of the residential facility when there was increased demand for provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). She added that it was important to support vulnerable children to be independent as this would reduce demand later in

life for Adult Social Care services. It was highlighted to the Committee that OFSTED had rated the educational provision as 'outstanding' in September 2016.

Mrs Taylor also expressed concern about the lack of detail in the report regarding:-

- The additional transport and revenue costs generated as a result of the potential closure of the residential facility;
- The accuracy of the report regarding the current usage of the residential facility.

Mrs Taylor felt that there had been limited discussion between the County Council and Maplewell Hall School about the residential provision; options should be considered that would keep the offer of a residential experience available for SEND children and young people.

Mrs Taylor suggested a full service review should be undertaken of the High Needs Block which recognised the variance in provision required to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and the benefit of having different provision across all special schools so all needs were catered for. Mrs Taylor asked for it to be placed on record that she did not support the proposal to close the residential facility at Maplewell Hall School.

The Chairman invited Kayti Ryan, Lead Petitioner and parent at Maplewell Hall School to speak.

Kayti Ryan presented the petition signed by 11,592 people in the following terms:-

“The petition opposes the closure of the residential facility at Maplewell Hall School.”

In summary, Kayti informed the Committee that:-

- The petition aimed to stop the closure of the residential facility at Maplewell Hall School;
- The children learned valuable life skills, preparation for adulthood and independence – all of which could not be taught at home;
- Those children who accessed residential provision gained far more than those who did not;
- That residential care was not included in EHCPs as it had always been presented as a facility the school automatically offered to students.

The Chairman invited Kirsty North, Care and Intervention Team Leader at Maplewell Hall School to speak.

Kirsty emphasised to the Committee that it was important to consider the children holistically, to provide support which met all their needs. She added that short breaks could prevent family breakdown and such short breaks were difficult to access through normal social care channels. The provision catered for children from across the County; if it was removed it would generate cost, safety and transport implications. The familiar environment of the residential facility to the education provision was important to the needs of the children and young people who attended and helped with developing their social and life skills.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Some Members were of the view that the issue was not clear cut as, although the residential provision for these children was not detailed in their EHCP, it provided an excellent opportunity for children and young people to develop independence and life skills;
- The benefit of the residential provision at Maplewell Hall School to children and young people was recognised. Members were assured that the value and quality of the provision was not in question;
- The EHCP was a holistic assessment, with input from professionals across education, health and social care. It considered all aspects of a young person's needs and family needs where appropriate. The assessment process was robust and inspected by OFSTED. It was reviewed on an annual basis and any parent who did not agree with the EHCP could appeal to an independent tribunal. Education provision needs were assessed by an Educational Psychologist. The residential element of this related to educational provision being required over a 24 hour period and no children in Leicestershire had been assessed with this need. However, if parents felt that they required respite care, as part of the social care element of the EHCP, they could request to be reassessed on this basis. This would not be provided by Maplewell Hall School as it was not registered to provide respite care;
- The after school provision began at school closure until 7.30pm. Some children stayed beyond this time, ate their evening meal, then carried out further 'after tea' activities, before going to bed. The criteria to determine who should benefit from this provision was set by the school. Should the decision be made to close the residential facility, the continuation of the after school provision would be a matter for the school to put in place; the County Council was supportive of working with the school on this;
- The Committee felt that the report lacked clarity regarding any additional transport costs that would be incurred if the residential provision was closed and costs for any children who might subsequently be assessed as requiring some form of residential or respite provision;
- The Committee understood that Maplewell Hall School received £293,000 for residential provision but was not clear of the actual cost of providing residential care and extra-curricular activities. It was also felt that discussions with the school should take place to understand whether a reduced offer could be put in place;
- Concern was expressed that, given the High Needs Block supported 3,600 children, there was a lack of equity and fairness in only 69 pupils receiving residential educational provision. The Committee was advised that the High Needs Block was significantly overspent with resources ringfenced by Government and likely to be capped. In light of the challenging resourcing position, and the growing demand for SEND services, difficult decisions had

to be made about the services that could be provided; it was important that services provided were based on assessment and sound criteria.

Mr Ould, Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Young People informed the Committee that an audit of the Maplewell Hall School had been commissioned, particularly as some parents had been asked to contribute between £9-15 per night for the residential provision for their children. He thanked the Committee for raising the issue of outcomes.

The Committee was reminded that at its meeting in November, the Cabinet would take the decision of whether to formally consult on the process of closure; they were not taking the decision to close the residential facility at Maplewell Hall School. The Committee was further advised that, as the petition on this matter had exceeded the 10,000 signature threshold, the Cabinet decision would be reported to the Council to enable it to discuss the matter. No action would be taken until after the Council meeting.

It was moved by Mr S. D. Sheahan CC and seconded by Mr G. Welsh CC:

“That the Cabinet be asked to defer this matter pending more detailed consideration of the issues that have been raised by this Committee”.

The motion was put and not carried with three Members voting in favour and six against.

The Chairman confirmed that the comments of the Committee would be passed to the Cabinet and summarised the key points as follows:-

- The Committee recognised the benefits of the residential provision at Maplewell Hall School; the value and quality of the provision was not in question;
- Little had been done to understand if a smaller offer could be made at reduced cost;
- There was uncertainty about the costs and alternatives available.

RESOLVED:-

That the comments of the Committee be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 24 November 2017.