

CABINET – 27 January 2026

Notice of Recommendations from the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 January 2026, for provision to Cabinet meeting of 4 February 2026.

Action required – for consideration by Cabinet and publication of a response within 2 months of 27 January 2026.

Invest to Save Budgets in the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (Children's Services O&S Committee agenda item 8).

Comment to Cabinet:

The Committee agreed to make Cabinet aware that the Committee:

- a.) Note the current High Needs Block (HNB) position and the impact and cost avoidance of the initiatives implemented to date including the increased supply of specialist places, the early years inclusion model (Dingley's Promise) and the positive impact of the Portage Service.
- b.) Endorse the invest-to-save programme and the establishment of the High Needs Block Deficit Recovery Plan Board, including its role in approving a benefits-measurement framework to evidence cost avoidance and prevent double-counting across initiatives.
- c.) Support the progression of the following priority initiatives:
 - Digitalisation of High Needs funding processes (integrated with the SCM upgrade)
 - Synergy Case Management (SCM) upgrade to go-live (target May–June 2026)
 - Pre-EHCP targeted funding model (subject to affordability and governance)

(Unanimous Decision)

Family Hubs Working Group final report (Children's Services O&S Committee agenda item 9).

The Committee endorsed the Working Group's findings and submits the following recommendations to Cabinet:

4. Notes the scrutiny that has been undertaken on Family Hubs and the working group's finding of the strong staff commitment to community engagement.
5. Endorses continued support for Family Hubs, with future priorities to include investment in staff capacity, professional development and enhanced tools to evidence impact.

(Unanimous Decision)