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Ask for: Anna Taylor
Date: 01/07/2021

Dear Member

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WEDNESDAY, 7 JULY 2021

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Wednesday, 7 July 2021 meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, the following report(s).

Agenda Item No

B1 **Call-in of Decision 21/00044 - Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme (Pages 1 - 22)**

Yours sincerely

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel

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By: Anna Taylor – Scrutiny Research Officer

To: Scrutiny Committee – 7 July 2021

Subject: Call-in of Decision 21/00044 – Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme

Background

1. In March 2021 Cabinet approved the creation of the Reconnect Programme (Decision 21/00035). In accordance with the decision of Cabinet in March 2021 a further key decision was needed to confirm the scope, objectives, outcomes and funding of the Reconnect Programme, together with confirmation of the governance and delegation arrangements. This key decision - 21/00044 – Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme was taken by Cabinet on 24 June 2021 (decision paperwork attached at Appendix).
2. Following the decision being taken, the call-in request was submitted by Dr Sullivan, supported by Mr Hook and Mr Stepto, thus meeting the requirements for any call-in to be supported by a minimum of two Members (including the Member submitting the call-in) from different political Groups.
3. The reasons of the call-in were duly considered by the Scrutiny Officer and determined to be valid under the call-in arrangements set out in the Constitution.

KCC Constitution – section 17.72

Members can call-in a decision for one or more of the following reasons:

- (a) The decision is not in line with the Council's Policy Framework,
- (b) The decision is not in accordance with the Council's Budget,
- (c) The decision was not taken in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in 8.5, and/or
- (d) The decision was not taken in accordance with the arrangements set out in Section 12.

4. The detailed reasons given by Dr Sullivan under the call-in criteria (listed above) are set out below.

4.1 In particular to section 17.72 (C) which refers to the principles of decision making. Of this section 8.5 a, d, e and f.

4.2 (8.5) All decisions of full Council or made on behalf of full Council will be made in accordance with the following principles:

(a) Action proportionate to the desired outcome. This is £10 million additional monies, it is not clear how the intended outcomes will be measurable, how the outcomes will be delivered.

(d) A presumption in favour of openness. This is £10 million additional monies, due to the lack of clarity and outcomes being expressly clear how they will be delivered with lack of meaningful milestones to measure the intended success of this scheme.

(e) Clarity of aims and desired outcomes. There is lack of clarity of the objectives as to how these aims will be achieved by who, by when, and where to deliver the aims.

(f) Explanation of the options considered and giving reasons for decisions. Lack of other options presented.

4.3 In addition to this, given the Reconnect programme is out with the agreed budget agreed at Full Council in February this year, the change and spend need to be fully explored and is met under the section 17.72 (b) of the Constitution.

Process

5. The Cabinet Members and relevant Officers will be attending the Scrutiny Committee meeting to present their response to the call-in, no additional written report has been requested due to the short length of time between the approval of the call-in and the Scrutiny Committee meeting date.
6. The Scrutiny Committee should consider the reasons set out by the Members calling-in the decision and the response from the Executive, giving due attention to the information made available during questioning and discussion on this item.

Options for the Scrutiny Committee

7. The Scrutiny Committee may:
 - a) make no comments
 - b) express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision
 - c) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending reconsideration of the matter by the decision-maker in light of the Committee's comments; or
 - d) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending review or scrutiny of the matter by the full Council.

Appendix

Decision 21/00044 – Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme

Record of Decision

Background Documents

Decision 21/00035 - Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme

Report Author

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From: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member – Integrated Children’s Services
Shellina Prendergast, Cabinet Member – Education and Skills
Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director – Children, Young People and Education

To: **Cabinet – 24 June 2021**

Subject: **Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: Previous report to Cabinet 15th March 2021, leading to decision 21/00035

Future Pathway of report: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

On 15 March 2021, Cabinet agreed the creation of the 'Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People's Programme'. This initiative invites the whole Kent community to join together to provide a range of exciting and supportive opportunities for children and young people during the period to end of August 2022, in order to recognise their selfless contribution to helping keep the residents of Kent as safe as possible during the past 15 months. The Revenue and Capital Outturn 2020-21 Report, presented to Cabinet as part of this agenda, includes a recommendation to set up a specific reserve totalling £10m to support the outcomes of Reconnect.

Due to limited timescales and the urgency to commence Reconnect, Cabinet confirm that its decision (21/00035) established the Programme via formal governance to ensure transparency, evidenced a clear intention to deliver in the future and allowed appropriate preparatory work to be undertaken, prior to a further key decision where scope, objectives, outcomes and funding for the full project may be confirmed. This report provides an update on the preparatory work undertaken, sets out the scope of the programme, including its aims, objectives and outcomes, and proposes a governance model and funding framework.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet to:

1. Set the scope of Reconnect as per section 4.1 of this report.
2. Agree the aims, strategic objectives and outcomes of Reconnect as per section 3 of this report.
3. Agree a specific Reconnect reserve of £10m, the funding principles and the criteria within which Reconnect will operate as set out within section 6 of this report, including the Funding Framework that is intended to provide sufficient flexibility to respond to the needs of the County and the allocation of additional funding sources that may become available over the life of this project, as set out in section 6.4 of this report.
4. Confirm the governance arrangements for Reconnect, as set out in section 8 of this report.

5. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take necessary actions, including but not limited to, entering into relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement Reconnect.
6. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance after consultation with Leader to update, review and amend the proposed distribution of funding in response to changing need, including use of additional funding within the scope of the programme.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Members have been united in expressing their concern about the impact of the pandemic on the children and young people (C&YP) of Kent and recognising the key role and responsibilities of the County Council in supporting our C&YP people recover. Accordingly, Cabinet approved the creation of a “Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People” Programme (Reconnect).
- 1.2 C&YP have made it clear that they want to feel optimistic and look forward. Reconnect must be for all, but it will recognise that some will need more support reconnecting, as the gaps will have become wider for some than others. It will promote **existing** opportunities for C&YP to connect or reconnect to, fund and empower others to create **additional** opportunities, and pull these together into a coherent offer. It will harness the variety of funding streams that exist now, and in the future providing a vehicle for coalescing, corralling and delivering opportunities.
- 1.3 The County Council has a range of ideas, plans and powers that can give life to Reconnect, but we recognise that we are not alone in that. Our colleagues elsewhere in the districts, boroughs and city councils will have their own ideas and plans and it is vital that we draw in partners who already occupy the space to work cohesively to support our C&YP. We will capitalise on the spirit of the Kent community to support each other.
- 1.4 Reconnect is a priority of the County Council and our community. It will operate between now and the end of August 2022, after which we aim to have a more sustainable, better networked community supporting C&YP. We want Kent to “give a year to the children”.

2. Vision Statement

2.1 A Vision of Reconnected Children and Young People

Childhood is a brief and precious period in life, which should be full of fun, adventure, new experiences, and social interactions. These experiences help shape the people we become. The childhoods of Kent’s C&YP have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Experiences will have varied, these may have been positive or negative and for many, both. We want to create positive change for C&YP. We know impactful change across the County is not something anyone or any single organisation can do alone.

We have a vision of an enhanced and networked approach to creating

opportunities for children and young people in their communities. Organisations and communities will thrive, joined around the shared value of generating meaningful impact and sustainable change for children and young people.

We believe in the power of local organisations and communities as drivers for change. C&YP are surrounded by a wealth of skills, strengths, and resources in their local communities. Reconnect is not just about connecting C&YP to these assets but connecting assets to each other to increase their potential. If we get this right, thriving Kent communities will lead to thriving C&YP in Kent.

3. Aims, Objectives and Outcomes of the Programme

3.1 The aim is to reconnect C&YP in Kent to:

- learning missed
- health and happiness
- friends, family and community
- sports, activities and the outdoors
- economic wellbeing.

3.2 The objectives for Reconnect are as follows:

- i. To support C&YP to re-engage in education following the pandemic.
- ii. To work with multi-agency partners, business, community organisations and groups to increase the number of local activities and opportunities available to C&YP in their communities.
- iii. To support C&YP to live healthier lifestyles and engage in sport and physical activity.
- iv. To promote suitable engagement with children's and family services and support groups.
- v. To work with businesses and partner agencies to support young people to engage with future employment opportunities.

3.3 The medium-term outcomes (to be realised during the programme) are:

- i. C&YP catch up with learning missed and are engaged in education.
- ii. More C&YP are engaged in healthier activity.
- iii. C&YP engage in health checks and dental checks.
- iv. Young people and families know how to access mental health services and develop good management strategies.
- v. More families access Free School Meal related benefits.
- vi. Enhance local networks for community assets. These have the resources and support needed to deliver a localised programme of opportunities.
- vii. The "accessibility gap" is reduced for disadvantaged C&YP.
- viii. Connections between C&YP and responsible adults from older generations are increased.
- ix. Families engage with local services and support groups.
- x. Young People that were aged between 15 and 19 at the start of the pandemic are given a better chance of securing work in future.

3.4 The long-term outcomes (to be realised after the programme) are:

- i. C&YP are engaged in education and achieve well. Attainment is back at pre-pandemic levels by 2024 for all students including, in particular, disadvantaged students.

- ii. C&YP are healthier both mentally and physically and understand how to live healthy lives.
- iii. Emotional resilience improves for C&YP.
- iv. Families are better equipped to understand the support that is available to their family to improve whole family wellbeing and prosperity.
- v. Communities can continue to provide a diverse range of opportunities based on the wants and needs of families and young people.
- vi. The “accessibility gap” continues to reduce for disadvantaged C&YP.
- vii. Families are empowered to navigate local services and enhance their self-efficacy and find the right support for them when they need it.
- viii. An increase in inter-generational connection is sustained long-term.
- ix. Young people that were aged between 15 and 19 at the start of the pandemic have as high employment rates in adult life as those that come before or go after.

4. Scope and Timescales

4.1 The following is in scope for the programme:

- Universal programme of activities for C&YP in Kent aged 0–19 years (or 24 with special educational needs and/or disabilities and **specifically** for activity related to unemployment amongst young people). Please note the paper to Cabinet in March 2021 indicated the age range commence at 2 years. The suggested change is to support babies and toddlers as they and their parents may have been isolated and less well supported during lockdown periods, and to support initiatives and activity regarding unemployed young people.
- Activities and opportunities relating to learning missed; health and happiness; family, friends, and communities; sports, activities, and the outdoors; and economic wellbeing.
- Existing and new opportunities.
- Targeted support for those needing more help to reconnect, including financial assistance to reduce the accessibility gap.
- Connecting funding streams.
- Linking initiatives to make the sum greater than the value of the parts.

4.2 The programme will not cover funding for activities post-August 2022 or demand management pressures for existing services.

4.3 There are three key phases to the development and delivery of Reconnect:

Phase 1 – Create climate for change (April – May 2021)

- Make a wide ranging and emotional case for the benefits of the programme.
- Establish a team to co-ordinate the activities within the programme.
- Set the programme vision for all those involved in delivering.

Phase 2 – Engage and enable people (May – August 2021)

- Meaningful engagement with all stakeholders including a universal awareness campaign.
- Identify existing networks and support them to enhance the power of their network to deliver the vision.

- Deliver quick wins, urgent support and programme of summer activities and celebrate them widely.

Phase 3 – Embed and sustain change (August 2021 – August 2022)

- Stay focused on delivery, measure outcomes and impact, and tell good news stories about the great work happening.
- Develop a Legacy Plan to support sustained outcomes and longer-term impact.

- 4.4 There are a number of forthcoming milestones associated with the programme, including:
- 24 June 2021 – Cabinet approves funding,
 - 30 June 2021 – CYPE Cabinet Committee update,
 - Early July 2021 – first Young Persons Steering Group meeting,
 - 19 July 2021 – launch of Reconnect online directory,
 - 31 August 2021 – conclusion of universal awareness campaign and 2021 summer programme,
 - September 2021 – receive monitoring reports from summer Reconnect and HAF commissioned activity,
 - September 2021, February 2022 and July 2022 – user reviews.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 A small Programme Team has been formed to manage the delivery of “Reconnect”, currently comprising a Programme Director, part-time Programme Manager, Programme Officer, Kickstart Project Manager and part-time Business Support Officer. A Reconnect Project Officer joins in June.
- 5.2 Six colleagues from across KCC and The Education People have agreed to be the Reconnect “Theme Leads”, co-ordinating Theme Teams and driving work forward to achieve the aims of Reconnect. These colleagues will be managing their Reconnect Themes alongside their current roles.
- 5.3 A Communications Officer, a Commissioning Officer and a Contracts Officer, and a Finance Officer, all dedicated to Reconnect, are being recruited by the relevant services.
- 5.4 Support will be required from across KCC directorates, not only in the form of opportunity provision, but also for management of Reconnect and delivery of the infrastructure required for the programme to succeed. For example, officers may be “Reconnect Network Champions” or participate in the programme design through “Theme Teams”.
- 5.5 Although “Reconnect” is led by KCC, it will require the involvement and resources of partners, local organizations and individuals to deliver activities for C&YP at a localised level.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 It is proposed that the programme be provided with dedicated KCC funding and be the umbrella for specific grant funding which supports the aims of Reconnect. The activities and projects funded by the programme will be

additional to the core activity of KCC's directorates, and the funding commitments will be time limited and will not be a recurring cost to the Council beyond 31 August 2022.

- 6.2 The Revenue and Capital Outturn 2020-21 Report, presented to Cabinet as part of this agenda, includes a recommendation to set up a specific reserve totalling £10m to support the outcomes of Reconnect. This includes £7.5m from the COVID reserve and £2.5m from the Containing Outbreaks Management Fund (COMF).
- 6.3 Cabinet has previously agreed that the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme would be sheltered under the Reconnect umbrella. This is £5.3m of targeted funding. A good proportion of the external funding has criteria targeting this to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, with clear eligibility criteria such as entitlement to Free School Meals. It is important to recognise that a universal offer does not mean all opportunities are universally free to the recipient.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that further funding streams will be made available by Government which will assist with successful achievement of Reconnect. To ensure there is no delay in assigning these resources to Reconnect, which is a time limited programme, the Corporate Director of Finance will be delegated authority to accept such grant allocations and allocate these to the Programme in consultation with the Leader.
- 6.5 A flexible approach to the deployment of the funding is proposed, subject to any specific grant conditions, to ensure the programme can respond to changes in need and demand across the county.
- 6.6 Established mechanisms for allocating funding will be used, where sensible to do so, to ensure pace and simplicity in Reconnect's delivery, for example COMF's grant award process, and Local Children's Partnership Group's approved process.
- 6.7 Monitoring and compliance checks will be applied to all areas of spend, in line with the requirements of the specific grant funding, to allow for informed Officer decision-making as part of the ongoing implementation of this Key Decision. It is recognised the level of checks will be proportional to the amount of funding awarded for specific activities.
- 6.8 A funding framework has been developed to ensure a consistent process for decision-making that aligns with the objectives of the Reconnect, as determined by this decision. The key principles include:
 - i. All spend should align to the purpose of the Reconnect Programme, and where appropriate, conditions of any specific grant funding attributed to this programme.
 - ii. KCC specific funding is expected to be split equally across the five aims of the programme.
 - iii. Initially, 25% of the £10m Reconnect Reserve will be assigned to Local Children's Partnership Groups (LCPGs) for local commissioning, delivery and monitoring. Spend will need to meet the aims, objectives and outcomes of Reconnect and the priorities agreed by the Delivery Board.

The allocation to LCPGs will be based on child population numbers (0-17 year olds) and a deprivation allowance based on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indices. As the programme develops this figure will be reviewed by the Cabinet Members for Education and Skills and Integrated Children's Services who will be able to increase this to 35%, if funding is available, and they deem this to be in the best interests of achieving the aims, objectives and outcomes of the programme. Any further allocation will require a further key decision. LCPGs will be expected to apportion 20% of their allocations to delivering each of the five aims of Reconnect.

- iv. To ensure consistent decision-making and best use of resources is made across the programme and individual aims the Theme Teams (described in section 10 of this report) will propose the priorities for spend within their theme and will lead County level commissioning activity related to their area, with recommendations being made to the Delivery Board (described in section 10). The Delivery Board will co-ordinate and approve spending requests. This is to ensure co-ordination and visibility across the themes and remove any risk of duplication. The Delivery Board will also be responsible for identifying the most appropriate funding stream for each request to ensure best use of resources across the Council.
 - v. Where funding is delegated to partners, such as LCPGs, the partners will develop plans for spend. These will be reviewed by the Delivery Board to ensure there is no duplication of commissioning by the Programme Team and LCPGs, and compliance with the funding criteria.
 - vi. Any organisations in receipt of the grant will be required to regularly report on the use of the funding and return any unspent funding if requested by KCC.
 - vii. To recognise the various funding streams this programme of activity will draw on, contract and grant conditions will be aligned to meet specific requirements. For example, the wording will be agreed to ensure both COMF and Reconnect conditions are conveyed appropriately. Monitoring arrangements have also been aligned to ensure partners, for example district councils, report simultaneously on COMF, Helping Hands and Reconnect spend and activity.
 - viii. Records will be kept of all funded activities to provide an auditable process.
 - ix. The use and impact of the spending commitments will be monitored regularly and reported to The Reconnect Partnership Board and CYPE's DMT.
- 6.9 Staff posts directly funded from the Reconnect Programme comprise of secondments and fixed term contracts ending 31 August 2022. These posts will be funded from dedicated or, where appropriate, external funding/grants that are sheltered within the programme.
- 6.10 An interim allocation of £50k per LCPG has been made and communicated in order to enable localised delivery of the urgent support needed by some C&YP to reconnect, and to deliver a summer programme. This allocation has been made via COMF monies and in accordance with the delegated authority already agreed for this grant.

- 6.11 It is anticipated that District Councils will wish to directly delivery activity to their local communities. They will be able eligible to apply for funding from the LCPG allocations, as determined by those groups, from funding streams such as the Holiday Activity and Food Programme where their proposals meet the necessary criteria for these, and from the central Reconnect funding pot in accordance with its funding rounds/arrangements.
- 6.12 In respect of Learning Missed activity, expenditure will focus on providing additionality therefore it is unlikely to include purchasing traditional classroom teaching resources on behalf of all schools, as they have autonomy to make their own decisions about the resources they chose to use. Reconnect will work closely with schools and settings to invest in resources which assist C&YP themselves to pursue learning at summer schools and outside of school with, as appropriate, the support of parents.

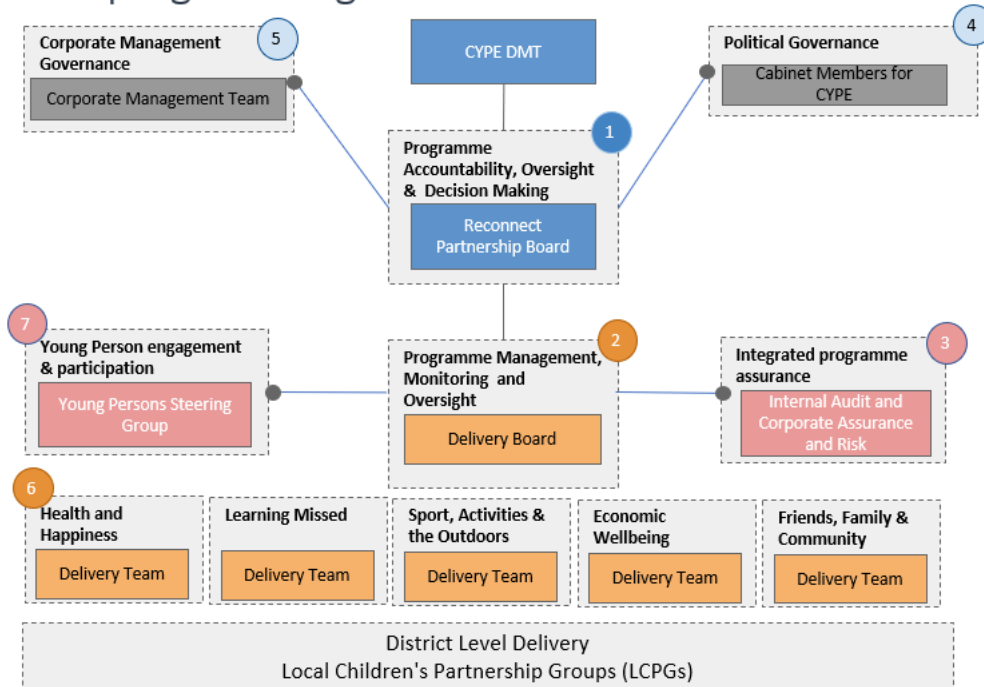
7. Equalities Implications

- 7.1 A programme level EQIA has been developed. "Theme Teams" will be responsible for ensuring that the localised delivery of the programme meets equality requirements.
- 7.2 The programme will be universal, supporting all C&YP aged 0 to 19/24 years old, but with targeted support as appropriate, for example a good proportion of the external funding has grant criteria targeting this to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, with clear eligibility criteria. Efforts will be made to target specific groups who are vulnerable, either by raising their awareness of the opportunities provided by the funding to ensure they do not miss out, or by direct provision of support. Evidence of the impact of Covid-19 on protected characteristics will be used to influence decision making.

8. Governance

- 8.1 The proposed governance structure for the programme is:

The programme governance structure



- 8.2 Key decision 21/00035 and the proposed recommendations for this paper delegates authority to the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education to implement Reconnect. The Directorate's Management Team acts as the programme owner, maintaining regular reports of progress and outcomes from the Reconnect Programme Director. A scheme of delegation is in place from the Corporate Director to the Reconnect Programme Director.
- 8.3 Political governance is provided by the two CYPE Cabinet Members who oversee the implementation of Reconnect, and hold the Corporate Director and Reconnect Programme Director to account. The Cabinet Members will take progress reports to Cabinet and CYPE Cabinet Committee as appropriate.
- 8.4 Reconnect seeks to unite the whole community behind the call to "give a year to the children". It is fundamental that there is a strong stakeholder voice to shape its strategic direction, its activities, spending priorities and outcomes, to provide the Programme Director with a unifying group of senior figures from across Kent's organisations who can influence and lead their sectors, and to hold the Programme Director to account for delivery and implementation of this community-based programme. The Reconnect Partnership Board provides these functions. Its membership comprises of Kent Police, district council representative, chamber of commerce, Kent and Medway CCG, schools, early years providers, community and voluntary sector, and KCC directorates.
- 8.5 Management of Reconnect sits with the Delivery Board, which will act as the main co-ordination apparatus, ensuring linkage between the theme teams and local delivery mechanism. Membership comprises of Theme Team Leads, Area Partnership Managers (who support the LCGPs), the Programme Team and the dedicated postholders from Finance, Communications and Strategic Commissioning. The Board receives data and information regarding the needs

and wants of C&YP, user feedback and survey data, determines the corresponding priorities and spending plans, drives delivery of the programme activities and commissions provision as appropriate.

- 8.6 The Theme Delivery Teams are responsible for analysing the needs and wants related to their areas, understanding the existing offer and identifying gaps. They will identify the priorities which will inform their commissioning plans (County/area level commissioning) and direct that of the LCPGs. The priorities will be co-ordinated by the Delivery Board.
- 8.7 Local planning, co-ordination, commissioning and delivery will be via the LCPGs, which are already mandated to make grant awards and undertake localised commissioning. For Reconnect activity they will operate with the aims and objectives set by/for the Programme by Cabinet and the priorities set by the Delivery Board.
- 8.8 Young Peoples' views have been heard and are shaping Reconnect (section 9.5 below), its design and delivery of programme activities. This will continue. Feedback will be gathered from children and young people, and their families and carers, throughout the programme to inform delivery. A Young Persons Steering Group, made up of 11–18-year-olds from across Kent, is being established to inform the programme and share feedback from young people. This group will meet every two months and a member of this group will be invited to sit on the Delivery Board to ensure the voice of young people is represented. The Programme Team will also continue to liaise with the children's workforce to understand what C&YP want from the programme.
- 8.9 Assurance will be provided by the Corporate Assurance and Risk Team and Internal Audit.

9. Progress to Date

- 9.1 The Reconnect Team has been undertaking a wide scale engagement programme. Reconnect has been positively received, both by external organisations and departments within KCC. All feedback has been incorporated into the programme's design principles, which are: we will focus on maximising the networks and structures that exist; amplify the great work of others; focus on meaningful impact; leverage support from people and organisations who are working towards the same shared goals; and prioritise people, relationships, interactions and behaviours over processes, systems and documents.
- 9.2 The Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services held two meetings, prior to the May elections, with LCPG Chairs and Opposition Members to discuss the programme. These meetings highlighted in particular the support for local design, delivery and co-ordination of the Programme using LCPGs as the vehicle for this, recognising the tremendous work already taking place in localities which needs amplifying and supporting to do more, and that local networks will be critical to the success of Reconnect.
- 9.3 Area Partnership Managers have consulted with their LCPGs. 100% of LCPG members in Ashford, Canterbury and Dover, 96% in West Kent, 75% in North Kent, and 82% in Thanet agreed that the vision and aims of Reconnect are clear.

LCPGs supported for the design principles of the programme and LCPG members are willing to be Reconnect Network Champions to help promote engagement with the programme at a local level. LCPGs indicated that to manage local co-ordination and delivery, funding, clear feedback from children and young people, resources, and an interface with the County Programme Lead were required. This support will be provided with LCPGs to enable them to support Reconnect in an effective way.

- 9.4 Communications materials, including a website and promotional videos, have been developed and shared online. Almost 500 people/organisations have signed up to the Reconnect Newsletter. A Communications and Engagement Strategy, and the branding and programme campaign materials have been approved.
- 9.5 User research with C&YP has, and continues, to take place, with outputs being used to shape the programme's offer. Focus groups have taken place, including with the Children in Care Focus Group, Children in Care 16+ Group, Kent Youth Voice, Mental Health Group, and Speak-out groups for North, South, East and West Kent. Feedback showed that C&YP would like to engage in a range of activities, including volunteering and work experience placements, and they would like to participate in activities focussed on mental health and resilience. Young people also raised the importance of knowing who was going to be at activities and what they would involve, to help reduce anxiety about attending new groups. A survey, asking what C&YP have missed most during lockdown and what the programme should deliver, was distributed to schools and settings, with onward distribution to families. Over 2,000 responses were received from schools, parents and carers, and C&YP. The responses were analysed and the key themes mentioned were:

What have C&YP missed?

- Socialising and being with friends
- Sport, physical activity and clubs
- School and having a routine

What would C&YP like to do as part of the Reconnect programme?

- Socialise, meet friends, and meet new people
- Fun activities including festivals, physical activity and clubs
- Outdoor activities, including camping and sailing

What would be a barrier to C&YP participating in the programme?

- Distance and travel
- Costs
- Anxiety of being in big groups, not knowing who else would be at the activities

- 9.6 Organisations providing activities or opportunities are informing us via a form on the Reconnect webpage. Details will be transferred to the What's On guide when this is complete.
- 9.7 The Reconnect Pledge is live. These can be applied to all sectors of the community and personalised. For example, these pledges may involve volunteering time to support with the delivery of local activities, donating items such as sports kits, providing access to facilities for clubs, or providing work

experience. The aim is to maximise the number of pledges made and publicise these as a visible display of the commitment of the whole Kent community to the County's C&YP.

- 9.8 A Reconnect 'Do It' webpage has been developed as a volunteering platform for the programme. Organisations can advertise volunteering vacancies and potential volunteers can search for opportunities.
- 9.9 Some activities for C&YP have already been delivered. The HAF programme delivered over 2,300 holiday places for eligible young people at Easter. Further, Invicta National Academy ran an Easter programme, providing online sessions covering Maths, English, confidence boosting and public speaking, with sessions being accessed by over 1,000 C&YP logging in every day.
- 9.10 Funding has been provided to KCC's Duke of Edinburgh Award's office and has been added to Headstart's Talents and Interests grants to ensure family finance is not a barrier to participation. The latter extends their existing grants scheme to primary children and ensures the whole County is covered. Funding has been provided to accelerate delivery of a Careers Enterprise Company Hub in Kent, which will help drive activity under the economic wellbeing theme. This funding is part matched by the Careers Enterprise Company, thereby securing additional value. Contract variations are being pursued to ensure targeted support, such as intensive mentoring, is available to more C&YP and across Kent as an immediate response to need. The "Playground" arts project has been commissioned to provide sessions across Kent, attracting £50k investment from the Arts Council.
- 9.11 Live learning opportunities for the summer have been commissioned from Invicta National Academy, a Kent based charity. They will provide daily live lessons in English, Maths, fitness and some sessions on other topics such as health and wellbeing, and confidence building. Lessons will be for Key stages 1-4, and run over a five week period. Schools will be able to access the lesson objectives and signpost children and families to particular sessions to encourage continued learning over the summer, targeted by their own gap analysis.
- 9.12 Indications are that over two thirds of secondary schools will run summer school provision. This is being further supported by Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) money for appropriate pupils.
- 9.13 Applications to deliver HAF over the summer continue to be received and evaluated. The closing date for applications is 25 June.
- 9.14 There will be a series of fun activity days in every district, delivered by district councils, KCC and the community sector.
- 9.15 Audiopi, a Kent based company which produces exam board approved, curriculum based audio podcasts to support GCSEs and A-levels have generously made their products available to all Kent schools and appropriate pupils free of charge throughout the summer period. They are also producing bespoke podcasts relating to health and well being and careers.
- 9.16 We are in discussions with leisure centre operators regarding a summer offer for all C&YP, together with HAF delivery.

9.17 Passenger transport Unit have agreed in principle with bus operators a free travel offer throughout the summer for secondary aged pupils and those in Year Six.

9.18 The summer reading challenge is being incorporated in to other Reconnect events and activities, such as those running in country parks.

10. Conclusions

10.1 Reconnect will bring together the wide array of opportunities that already exist in the County which support the health, wellbeing, and development of our C&YP. It seeks to connect these together, so they are stronger, more navigable, better understood, and to add to these and enable others to do so too. It is a programme for the C&YP of our community, delivered by our community.

11. Recommendations:

Cabinet to:

1. Set the scope of Reconnect as per section 4.1 of this report.
2. Agree the aims, strategic objectives and outcomes of Reconnect as per section 3 of this report.
3. Agree a specific Reconnect reserve of £10m, the funding principles and the criteria within which Reconnect will operate as set out within section 6 of this report, including the Funding Framework that is intended to provide sufficient flexibility to respond to the needs of the County and the allocation of additional funding sources that may become available over the life of this project, as set out in section 6.4 of this report.
4. Confirm the governance arrangements for Reconnect, as set out in section 8 of this report.
5. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take necessary actions, including but not limited to, entering into relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement Reconnect.
6. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance after consultation with Leader to update, review and amend the proposed distribution of funding in response to changing need, including use of additional funding within the scope of the programme.

12. Background Documents

12.1 The Reconnect: Kent C&YP Programme paper, which went to Cabinet on 15 March 2021, was used to support the development of this report.

13. Contact Details

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Cabinet

DECISION NO:

21/00044

For publication

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or
- b) be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:
 - the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;
 - significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme

Decision:

Cabinet agrees to:

- i) Set the scope of Reconnect as per section 4.1 of this report.
- ii) Agree the aims, strategic objectives and outcomes of Reconnect as per section 3 of this report.
- iii) Agree a specific Reconnect reserve of £10m, the funding principles and the criteria within which Reconnect will operate as set out within section 6 of this report, including the Funding Framework that is intended to provide sufficient flexibility to respond to the needs of the County and the allocation of additional funding sources that may become available over the life of this project, as set out in section 6.4 of this report.
- iv) Confirm the governance arrangements for Reconnect, as set out in section 8 of this report.
- v) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take necessary actions, including but not limited to, entering into relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement Reconnect.
- vi) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance after consultation with Leader to update, review and amend the proposed distribution of funding in response to changing need, including use of additional funding within the scope of the programme.

Reason(s) for decision:

1. Background

- 1.1 On 15 March 2021, Cabinet agreed the creation of the 'Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People's Programme (decision 21/00035). This initiative invites the whole Kent community to join together to provide a range of exciting and supportive opportunities for children and young people during the period to end of August 2022, in order to recognise their selfless contribution to helping keep the residents of Kent as safe as possible during the past 15 months.
- 1.2 Due to limited timescales and the urgency to commence Reconnect, Cabinet approved the creation of the Programme and authorised the action necessary to establish but required a

further report and key decision to confirm the scope, objectives, outcomes and funding for the full project.

2. Aims, Scope, Objectives and Outcomes

- 2.1 The report set out the aims, vision, scope, objectives, outcome and objectives of the Reconnect programme and is attached to this document

3. Equalities Assessment

- 3.1 A programme level EQIA has been developed. "Theme Teams" will be responsible for ensuring that the localised delivery of the programme meets equality requirements.
- 3.2 The programme will be universal, supporting all C&YP aged 0 to 19/24 years old, but with targeted support as appropriate, for example a good proportion of the external funding has grant criteria targeting this to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, with clear eligibility criteria. Efforts will be made to target specific groups who are vulnerable, either by raising their awareness of the opportunities provided by the funding to ensure they do not miss out, or by direct provision of support. Evidence of the impact of Covid-19 on protected characteristics will be used to influence decision making.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The programme will be provided with dedicated KCC funding and be the umbrella for specific grant funding which supports the aims of Reconnect. The activities and projects funded by the programme will be additional to the core activity of KCC's directorates, and the funding commitments will be time limited and will not be a recurring cost to the Council beyond 31 August 2022.
- 4.2 The Revenue and Capital Outturn 2020-21 Report, presented to Cabinet as part of this agenda, includes a recommendation to set up a specific reserve totalling £10m to support the outcomes of Reconnect. This includes £7.5m from the COVID reserve and £2.5m from the Containing Outbreaks Management Fund (COMF). This recommendation was adopted by Cabinet.
- 4.3 Further information regarding the financial implications and funding framework for Reconnect can be found in the report attached to this Record of Decision.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

This decision will be considered by the Children, Young People's and Education Cabinet Committee on 30th June, due to the timeframes involved and local elections it was not possible for the Committee to consider this decision prior to Cabinet on 24 June 2021.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Reconnect will bring together the wide array of opportunities that already exist in the County which support the health, wellbeing, and development of our C&YP. It seeks to connect these together, so they are stronger, more navigable, better understood, and to add to these and enable others to do so too. It is a programme for the C&YP of our community, delivered by our community.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

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signed

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date

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