

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held at Council Chamber on Tuesday, 16th November, 2021.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr D Beaney, Mr C Beart, Mr A Brady, Mrs B Bruneau, Mr G Cooke, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr Lehmann, Mr R C Love, OBE, Ms M McArthur and Dr L Sullivan

OTHER MEMBERS:

OFFICERS:

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

32. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Reidy and Mr Roper.

33. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

34. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 4)

1) Mrs Prendergast said the Kent Commissioning Plan which was an annual document which set out how KCC was to carry out its responsibilities for ensuring the sufficiency of high quality places for all learners. In recent weeks, meetings had taken place with the district and borough council leaders and planning officers to discuss the expected future needs within their areas over the next 5 years and how needs might be best met.

Work had been undertaken to understand the challenges around demographic changes and the influence of rising labour and material costs on bringing forward housing developments. Delays had contributed to increased revenue costs where mobile classrooms were installed to meet demand in cases where schools did not open in time. In parallel, detailed work had been undertaken to clarify the capital position to ensure that KCC's statutory duties were met. Discussions were ongoing with the Department for Education (DfE) on capital funding to ensure maximisation of resource. While recent correspondence from the DfE on the increased allocation for SEND capital was welcomed, the actual level had not been confirmed.

Internally, officers had provided an initial verification that KCC was providing value for money in use of capital funding and a peer review was being arranged. The securing of developer contributions in a timely manner had emerged as a critical issue and was also being discussed with the DfE.

Home to school transport had continued to be an issue nationally. Growing demand and difficulties in securing appropriate transport and staffing had created a 'perfect storm' which officers had been managing during the term. Work had been undertaken to deal with the backlog and it was noted that since a question was asked at County Council on 4 November 2021, the number of outstanding applications for appeals for transport for pupils with ECHPs had reduced from 145 to 65. Work was ongoing to reduce this further.

Mrs Prendergast and Mrs Chandler had written a letter at the end of September 2021 to the Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, regarding the high needs funding deficit as well as the basic need capital funding gap. A response was received from Will Quince, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Children and Families). In his letter, he recognised the pressure of the high needs budget had affected some local authorities' finances and cited that provisional high needs allocations for Kent in 2022-23 were to be 8% higher than the funding allocated in the previous year. Mrs Prendergast said that she would share the correspondence with Members.

2) Mrs Chandler said that there had been a high number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs) arriving in Kent that week. Following Lord Blunkett's intervention regarding the National Transfer Scheme being made mandatory, the Leader had reiterated in interviews KCC's position that mandating the scheme was essential. However, the agreement on safe care and reception scheme was working, although transfers had not been as swift as the Home Office might have hoped and the speed in the numbers of transfers appeared to be slowing. During the previous week, 39 young people had arrived, of which 11 were under 16 years old and were placed in foster care. 27 were 16 and 17 year old boys and went to a reception centre. One girl who was over 16 years old went into a semi-independent placement. This was over the agreed capacity and it was the aim that no further UASCs be accepted until the number had lowered to within the agreed 360. On average, 25 new arrivals had been accepted per week under the new arrangements.

There were 17,500 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in place across the county and there were 1485 open requests undergoing the assessment process. KCC's performance across the county on the timely completion of educational psychology assessments and EHCPs had continued to improve. Over the previous two months, the Educational Psychology Service had completed over 90% of their assessments within the statutory timeframe. There were a small number of complex historical cases that were to have completed assessments by February 2022. The EHCP time limit was running at 42% for the year and continued to improve month on month. Applications remained at around 350 per month and this was higher than before the pandemic. Most requests were coming from parents and further analysis of this was being undertaken. Many of the requests were more complex than they were prior to the pandemic as well.

Two surveys had recently been undertaken of Qualified Social Work staff and of Care Leavers. 540 responses had been received for the survey of Qualified Social Work Staff and 543 responses had been received for the survey of Care Leavers, which was closing on the day of the meeting. It was noted that it was important to listen to what both cohorts were saying. It would be looked at with officers how to take forward the key messages from each survey.

KCC teamed up with the Young Lives Foundation to try to raise £20,000 which would enable each of Kent's 2000 Care Leavers to receive a £10 gift on Christmas morning. The Corporate Parenting Christmas Appeal was run annually and prior to the pandemic, physical gifts were donated. Last year, the Appeal was very successful and therefore, the target was more ambitious for Christmas 2021. Members were encouraged to support the appeal.

Mrs Allen's enthusiasm was missed this year and Members were reminded of her encouragement to be generous to young people.

35. 21/00101 - Young Carers - procurement of a new service

(Item 5)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services), Helen Cook, Senior Commissioner and Matt Dunkley (Corporate Director of CYPE) were present for this item.

1) Ms Holden introduced the report regarding procurement of a new service for young carers. There were two elements: workforce development and support to carers. A 3 year contract was proposed with an open tender with two elements of extension.

2) In response to questions, it was noted:

- Concerns were raised by Members regarding engagement with stakeholders and in particular, engagement with young carers. Members were advised that service user feedback was part of contract monitoring and there were monthly monitoring meetings being undertaken. There was a process for receiving compliments, complaints and feedback from service users.
- Those working with young people were being 'upskilled' to recognise young carers they were working with and could make referrals. The young person was able to decide whether they wanted a service.
- Further details were requested about the decision and it was asked that further information be brought to January's meeting.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision to:

A) Commence formal procurement activity to tender for a service, award a contract and develop robust contract management for oversight of the contract performance.
and

B) Delegate authority for the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member to award a contract following a competitive tender process;

4) Dr Sullivan asked for it to be recorded that she did not support the proposed decision.

5) It was agreed that further information be brought to the next meeting.

36. 21/00093 - Representation, Rights and Advocacy (RRA) Services - procurement of a new service
(Item 6)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services) and Helen Cook, Senior Commissioner were present for this item.

1) Ms Holden introduced the report regarding the procurement of a new service through an open tender for a 3 year contract with two individual 1-year extensions.

2) In response to questions, it was noted:

- The service was statutory so service needed to provide service above cap.
- Work was ongoing with Kent Police around setting 'appropriate adult' interviews within certain times. Rather than detaining young people overnight while waiting for an appropriate adult, interviews were to be set during daytime hours.
- Anyone that was arrested by Kent Police was assessed by the sergeant on duty to establish their level of need, as appropriate adults were used for adults as well as young people.

3) RESOLVED to agree the recommendations outlined in the report.

37. 21/00094 - Regional Residential Procurement Project: DfE Phase 2
(Item 7)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services) and Matt Dunkley (Corporate Director of CYPE) were present for this item.

1) Ms Holden introduced the report. A point of clarification was made regarding point 5.7 in the agenda report. Members were asked to disregard the figure mentioned and the reference to maximum cost.

2) In response to questions, it was noted:

- There were 3 local authorities in the pilot scheme and initially there had been 4, with the view that it would be extended to other authorities in the South East (not London) if it was successful. The authorities were selected on the basis of a number of different factors and KCC was the largest of those selected.
- The market for residential procurement had not been working in local authorities' favour as prices were set between providers and there was little price control. The project aimed to take back some of the control from an increasingly aggressive provider market.
- There had been problems in finding appropriate placements for complex young people with high needs individuals.
- Members queries around the length of the contract and were advised that there were mechanisms to terminate the contract.
- There had been co-production with young people. A short video had been provided for Members about the experiences of young people and young people had been involved with developing questions and on evaluation

panels. A participation scheme for adults with lived experience would be looked into.

- Lead Members across the South East shared the concerns that had led to the project being put in place and West Sussex Council were acting as lead on the procurement. The partnership agreement was still being drafted.

3) RESOLVED to agree the recommendations outlined in the report.

38. 21/00095 - Recommissioning of Short breaks 2022-2024 and New Short Break Model Implementation
(Item 8)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services) was present for this item.

1) Ms Holden introduced the report.

2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- As part of the grant process, a prospectus was produced for the voluntary sector and the voluntary sector was then to respond and identify the needs of young people in their localities. Proposals would then be evaluated and funding distribution would also be looked at, taking into consideration issues such as deprivation.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

39. Adoption Annual report (previously called RAA)
(Item 9)

Caroline Smith, Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting and Sarah Skinner, head of Adoption Partnership South East were in attendance for this item.

1) Mrs Chandler introduced the report.

2) Ms Smith and Ms Skinner outlined the report. Members were advised that the pandemic had added challenge to launching the service but a significant number of children had been matched. Work had continued to place children, recruit and assess adoptive parents. There had been a lot of interest from prospective adopters who had attended information events. The other priority was to support adopters to ensure that they continue to be supported.

3) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- The report had been drafted earlier in the year and arrangements around physical and virtual meetings were being reviewed.
- KCC Members were able to sit on the panels, although there was a significant workload for panel members. There had previously been insufficient volunteers.
- It was also noted that a more diverse range of people was needed to sit on panels.

4) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

40. HMIP Inspection of Youth Justice
(Item 10)

Dan Bride, Assistant Director (North & West Kent Adolescent Services and Youth Justice Head of Service); Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence; Stuart Collins, Director of Integrated Children's Services (West Kent and EHPS Lead) Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director of CYPE were present for this item

1) Mr Collins introduced the report.

2) Further to questions from Members, the following points were noted:

- The key purpose of the Youth Justice Service was to prevent offending and re-offending. Work was delivered in the community, in custody and on release from custody. The Youth Justice Service was a statutory service and KCC shared responsibility with statutory partners for the strategic and operational service delivery.
- The intervention and outcomes from intervention were considered to be good but the qualities of assessments and plans had not been considered good and were inconsistent, with insufficient management oversight to make them good enough. Expectations and examples of good practice were shared and Team managers were tasked with ensuring consistency of quality. There were to be roadshows which were mutual engagement events and this was where good practice would be shared as well as other methods such as newsletters and a resource hub with guidance and templates.
- HMIP had noted that Kent Police were making unilateral decisions about imposing Informal Community Resolutions were being offered, which were a criminal justice disposal but meant young people had not entered the criminal justice system formally. Early Help was then offered but in future, it would be offered prior before a community resolution was imposed, and decisions would be made jointly with Kent Police to divert young people from the criminal justice system.
- A provider called We Are With You delivered the Kent Youth Drug Intervention Service (KYDIS) which was offered to young people for low level substance misuse offences. Young people could also be referred to early help for a more holistic intervention for substance misuse.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

41. Kent Commissioning Plan
(Item 11)

Nick Abrahams, Area Education Officer (West Kent); Ian Watts and Marisa White, Area Education Officer; Lee Round, Area Education Officer and Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director for CYPE were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Abrahams introduced the Kent Commissioning Plan (KCP) report and advised that this report showed the continuation of trends that had been seen in the previous few years. There had been a decrease in the number of births overall in Kent. It was forecast that over the next 5 years there would be fewer primary aged children and more secondary age children. Beyond the next 5 years, forecasting was being done for the significant house building due to take place in Kent and the associated anticipated pressure on schools' places.

2) Further to questions from Members, the following points were noted:

- The KCP had to respond to policy direction and the detail of the new capital settlement for SEN was being looked at. How the capital was used was important for the future.
- A request was made for quarterly area meetings with Area Education Officers and other services in order to brief local Members.
- Concerns were raised about 16-19 education provision and the 16-19 Review was attempting to address issues around this. There were challenges around getting a broad and balanced offer for people and providers were less under KCC's influence or post-16 education where it was not a statutory responsibility. However, the review has shown the current model was unsustainable.

3) RESOLVED to agree the recommendations outlined in the report.

4) Mr Brady and Dr Sullivan asked for it to be recorded that they had abstained from the vote.

42. 21/00092 - Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Alterations to the School Year 2021/22
(Item 12)

Christine McInnes, Director of Education was in attendance for this item

1) RESOLVED to agree the recommendation in the report.

43. Performance Monitoring
(Item 13)

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report.

2) A request was made for further information regarding delays in issuing ECHPs across the districts in Kent and further information regarding children for whom KCC acted as corporate parent.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

44. Ofsted Dashboard
(Item 14)

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence and Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director of CYPE were present for this item.

1) Members noted the report.

45. Work Programme
(Item 15)

1) Members noted the work programme.