

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 Online on Tuesday, 11th January, 2022.

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

46. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Constanti.

47. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda
(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

48. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2021
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held on 14 September 2021 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

49. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2021
(Item 5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held on 16 November 2021 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

50. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 6)

1) Mrs Prendergast announced the launch of the SEND Inclusion Leadership programme which started from 11 January 2022 with leadership teams from 72 mainstream schools taking part in the first cohort.

The transformation programme was commissioned by KCC from a consortium including the Kent based Learning Leadership South East (LLSE), the National Association of Special Educational Needs (nasen) and the Education Development Trust.

360 Kent schools were to benefit from a professional development programme which had been shaped by input from officers, the Kent Association of Headteachers, The Education Endowment Fund and the organisations leading on delivery.

Participating schools were to benefit from:

- A bespoke development programme to help the school community improve their SEND inclusion,
- locally developed materials and training,
- expert support from a nominated Inclusion Leader of Education (ILE) and
- funded release time for participating school leaders.

Mrs Prendergast looked forward to seeing the impact of this and the other two big SEND school transformation programmes, Nurture schools and Supported Employment as they were being rolled out across the county.

On Thursday, 6 January Cabinet agreed the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2022-26, Cabinet noted that housebuilding was forecast to place significant pressure on school places, particularly in the medium to longer term and raised concern that whilst the current system of securing developer contributions was an imperfect one, some alternative mechanisms could disadvantage upper tier authorities such as KCC further.

This issue was also raised by members of this committee when it discussed the KCP at its previous meeting. The issue was considered to be wide ranging and Mrs Prendergast was working with colleagues across Cabinet to seek that it was recognised by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as the Department considers any future national planning reforms.

Whilst the KCP sets out the principles by which proposals were determined and future provision was forecast, the KCP was a live document and our Area Education Officers were to continue to work with schools, district and borough councils, diocesan authorities, KCC members and local communities, to ensure KCC meets its responsibilities as the Strategic Commissioner for Education Provision in Kent.

The fluidity of the demographic trends was illustrated by the falling demand for secondary school places in the Thanet area, which led to the Minister's decision at the end of last year not to proceed with the building of Park Crescent Secondary school. This decision had eased the pressure on capital funding which can now be redirected where we know there is continued growth. Thanks were given to all the officers that were involved in shaping this document and for their continued support.

Schools played a critical role in rural communities and KCC remained committed to supporting schools to thrive. KCC were monitoring the potential impact on small schools of changes in the national funding formula, in resources available to Local Authorities and of the government's intention to academize all schools.

The Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, had written an open letter to education and childcare leaders on the return to education settings in 2022. In his

letter, he acknowledged the huge commitment from all in the sector in continuing to care for and provide high quality education, care and pastoral support for children and young people. He had emphasised the need to keep children and young people attending settings and school, and the importance of face-to-face teaching, except in exceptional circumstances. KCC endorsed this view and thanked those leading schools and settings and their staff for their tremendous commitment and work in the education of our children and young people.

New guidance issued by the DfE also concentrated on maximising the number of children in attendance at school and college - for the maximum amount of time. In light of the Omicron variant surge, the government had temporarily recommended that face coverings were worn in classrooms and teaching spaces for all students in Year 7 and above. The advice was short term only – until 26 January 2022.

The rules around self-isolation had also changed and the guidance explained how any pupil testing positive might be able to end their self-isolation period before the full 10 days. They were able to take a lateral flow device test from 6 days after the start of symptoms and another the next day – at least 24 hours later. If both tests were negative and the pupil did not have a high temperature, they were then able to return to their education setting.

Officers from both Education and Public Health had provided support and guidance to Headteachers – via various channels – provided updated government guidance and encouraged schools to continue with their own risk assessments to keep their school communities safe.

NHS England had asked that all eligible students be offered a second dose of the vaccine before the February half term – with students becoming eligible for a second dose 12 weeks after their first. The School Immunisation Service (SAIS) had produced a timetable for delivery of the second dose visits – those schools who had their visit scheduled the weeks commencing 10 and 17 January were informed prior to the Christmas break and the service aims to inform all other schools by the end of next week. Regular webinars were also to be run throughout the programme covering the process – including consents, logistics and so forth.

At the same time, the NHS had also stated that no other programmes could be put at risk through the delivery of the covid vaccines, and the School Immunisation Service was also rolling out a parallel Human Papillomavirus Vaccination programme so both the Service and secondary schools were experiencing considerable additional pressure in the first half term.

The guidance issued by the Department for Education regarding winter planning was that, “Schools should, wherever possible, stay open in severe weather. They play a key role in their communities and by staying open help both the pupils and parents”. The Winter Planning guidance provided advice to Headteachers about the risks schools may face and offered preventative strategies and advice on how to communicate a school’s closure to parents, stakeholders and the Local Authority. Area Education Officers were available to provide any support that the schools required.

2) Further to questions and comments, it was noted:

- Lateral flow tests were important in keeping schools open and assurances were given that these were available to schools. There had been uneven

distribution across schools but there had been a meeting with head teachers to discuss re-distribution.

- Maximising developer contributions towards schools was important and work was ongoing with the DfE and government departments to maximise the funding on basic need and the capital programme.
- KCC officers had met with Kent Association of Head Teachers and guidance had gone out to schools regarding Covid-19 guidance. Funding was being made available to schools for ventilation units and schools were being encouraged to put in bids. Concerns were raised about whether the funding would be adequate.

3) Mrs Chandler said that the Christmas Campaign for Care Leavers raised £23,000, meaning that KCC was able to provide over 2,000 care Leavers in Kent with a gift. Discussions were underway to determine how we best spend the additional money that was raised. Thanks were given to all who donated.

Thanks were given to David Weiss and he was wished a long and happy retirement after 43 years in local government. Over the previous 5 years, David had led the Headstart programme which aimed to help young people and their families through improved resilience and developing their knowledge and lifelong skills to maximise both their own, and their peers' emotional health and wellbeing. His leadership had ensured that the programme was designed and implemented with young people at its heart, and this had been crucial to HeadStart's success.

The six-year programme was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and the programme was to officially complete its work in 2022. A full report on HeadStart was to be come to the June meeting of CYPE Cabinet Committee.

As part of the Reconnect Programme, 62 Holiday Activity Fund provisions were delivered which offered 3139 places to our children and young people. Additional e-vouchers were issued, requested via Social Workers and Early Help Workers for those children who were not in receipt of the Free School Meals.

Formal monitoring reports were due later in January, however the on-line booking system indicated that 47 provisions were showing 80% or more take up. Reasons for non-attendance were mainly attributed to concerns over COVID or impacted on family Christmas plans. A parent and child online questionnaire was launched to get feedback on the Reconnect and Holiday Activity Fund.

In terms of the locality grants, Round 2 was successfully operated and Round 3 which seeks to deliver activity for summer 2022 was launched on 5 January. The County Grant application process closed on 9 January.

On 23 December, the Leader of Kent County Council wrote to Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Department of Levelling up, Communities and Housing, and addressed the incredibly difficult operational challenges that the authority faced as a result of the pandemic.

Integrated children's services staff were still having to manage unprecedented pressures in all front-line services and with that, these services were becoming

increasingly challenging places to work, with high levels of staff sickness with the rapid spread of Omicron variant undoubtedly contributing, increased referrals and demand for services, unsurprisingly some staff were becoming exhausted.

Statutory partners had been unable to provide the same level of service as they had been redirected to help manage other duties as a result of the pandemic. This was also a particular problem within the Family Courts, where a request for a Court hearing was being given a date in June, placing further pressure on our social workers as they manage the risk that may potentially have for vulnerable children.

Despite resilience planning, which had been put in place, the operating environment was becoming increasingly fragile. The hard work and resilience of staff was very much recognised and thanks were given to staff for their continued dedication in supporting our most vulnerable children, young people and families in very difficult circumstances.

4) Further to questions and comments, it was noted:

- Sustainability had been part of the Headstart Programme and further information about the sustainability plan would be brought to June's meeting of CYPE Cabinet Committee.
- It was also being considered which aspects of the Reconnect Programme would be possible to maintain.
- Staff in all sectors had been affected by absences associated with Covid-19 and contingency plans were in place to prioritise statutory visits and duties. Staff sickness levels from the Omicron variant were not as high as predicted.
- Children's Services relied on other agencies to protect children such as the Family Courts and there were large backlogs which were creating delays for children. Availability of health staff had been a problem and this was another factor adding complexity and pressure to ICS cases.

51. Performance Monitoring *(Item 7)*

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

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report. It was highlighted that all indicators for Integrated Services had remained stable with the majority RAG-rated as Green and some as Amber. In Education indicators, there had continued to be pressures within the SEN service with the work on EHCPs. The indicator had been changed to a monthly 'snapshot' rather than a yearly, rolling indicator.

The section of indicators relating to vulnerable groups would be reinstated once data around pupil attainment gap and progress was available later in 2022.

2) Further to comments and questions from Members, it was noted:

- The EHCP timescales indicator was being monitored very closely and was being discussed in more detail at the SEN Improvement Board.
- Concerns were raised about district variations. This was due to staff pressures and the proportion of ECHPs being issued that were cleared from the backlog balanced with those within timescale.
- There was a working group looking at how best to target families eligible for free early education places. A list was received from the DWP each term. It was thought that take up had been affected by the pandemic.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

52. Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership's second annual report (Item 8)

Jennifer Maiden-Brooks, System Improvement Manager, KSCMP, was in attendance for this item.

1) Dr Maiden-Brooks introduced the report.

2) Further to comments and questions from Members, it was noted:

- There were 3 equally responsible partners: KCC, Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group and Kent Police.
- A peer-on-peer sexual abuse audit tool was available for schools on the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency partnership website. A survey was being designed to establish how effective the toolkit was so further refinements could be made.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

53. Budget Proposals Report (Item 9)

1) Mr Oakford introduced the report and said that the 2022-23 Budget and Medium-Term proposals had been developed against a background of considerable uncertainty and volatility. It was recognised that there were always some uncertainties within the Budget as it was difficult to predict spending on demand led budgets with a high degree of accuracy. The presentation of the capital programme had been enhanced to show a 10-year horizon. It was essential that additional borrowing was minimised to avoid pressures on the Revenue Budget and only borrow where it was essential to meet statutory obligations. It was not a legal requirement to set a balanced medium-term financial plan. However, a medium-term financial plan was important to demonstrate the financial sustainability of the authority.

KCC was facing exceptional spending demands in the forthcoming year including as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic which had significantly changed demands and there was additional latent demand, increasing complexity, changes in social and

working lives as well as the economic impact of rising inflation. It was vitally important to distinguish between known changes, variances from the current approved Budget or known changes in the forthcoming year as there was little scope other than to accept and fund these and the forecast for future changes. Within the forecast challenging targets had been set to bear down on future prices and demand pressures in order to set an affordable and balanced Budget.

Provisional grant allocations had been included in the draft Budget but these were not enough to fully fund growth pressures. Hence the council will have to continue to find savings. It was proposed to increase council tax within the government's 2% (+1% social care levy) referendum limit.

2) Mrs Chandler said that the consultation responses had indicated that respondents were most uncomfortable with savings within Children's Social Services and early intervention to prevent the need for more costly interventions was also strongly preferred by respondents. This had been reflected in the Integrated Children's Services draft Budget. Savings were focused on improvement of service outcomes rather than reduction of services.

3) Mrs Prendergast said that the biggest financial challenge was the funding of support for children with SEND. There had been a large increase in children accessing home to school transport. It was expected that the inclusion agenda would relieve pressure in this area as more children would receive their education closer to home.

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

- There was to be a central contingency budget. Funds from this budget could be applied for if demography impacts could be evidenced. This had been agreed in consultation with the corporate directors.
- There had been delays in delivering some savings due to the impact of the pandemic.
- Savings relating to school transport had not been possible previously, but work was underway to look at efficient ways of transporting children such as standard pick-up points, charging for post-16 and pass price increases. Any changes would be subject to consultation.

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

54. Special Educational Needs Strategy 2021 - 2024 - Update *(Item 10)*

Mark Walker, Director of SEND and Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director of CYPE were present for this item

1) Mr Walker introduced the report.

2) Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted:

- Staff were being 'skilled up' and given training around early intervention so that educational needs are met.

- There were a large number of independent non-maintained schools and Kent had a large special school sector in comparison to neighbouring local authorities. Moving forward, children would be support within their local mainstream schools
- Good work was being undertaken in re-calibrating KCC's relationship with parents through the Parents and Carers Together organisation.

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

4) Dr Sullivan, Mr Brady and Mr Lehmann asked for it to be recorded that they did not support the proposed decision.

55. Coordinated Scheme of Admissions

(Item 11)

Craig Chapman, was in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Chapman introduced the report.

2) Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted:

- The process of children moving from infant to junior schools could not be automated.

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

56. SEND update

(Item 12)

Mark Walker, Director of SEND was in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Walker introduced the update.

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

- The consultation on the Special Educational Needs Strategy 2021-24 showed that parents and carers wanted children to be included in more local schools.
- There was engagement with young people through a jointly funded SEND Youth Participation Officer and success with engagement would be built on.

3) Members RESOLVED to note the update.

57. Specialist Teaching and Learning Services

(Item 13)

1) It was agreed by Members that the item be deferred to the next meeting, as further information had been requested by Members.

58. Schools Funding Arrangements for 2022-23

(Item 14)

Karen Stone, CYPE Finance Business Partner was in attendance for this item.

1) Mrs Prendergast introduced the report.

2) Ms Stone outlined the report regarding the setting of budgets. Reference had been made to Appendix B in the agenda report but this had not been included so was to be distributed separately.

3) Further to comments and questions from Members, it was noted:

- Schools were funded by their number at the October census and in year admissions were managed by schools within their core budgets.

4) RESOLVED to agree the recommendations as outlined in the report.

**59. Adoption Partnership South East, Regional Adoption Agency -Annual Report
(Item 15)**

Sarah Skinner, Head of Service, Adoption Partnership South East Regional Adoption Agency and Sarah Hammond, Director of Integrated Children's Services (Social Work) were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Hammond and Ms Skinner introduced the report.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

**60. Young Carers Overview - Commissioned Service
(Item 16)**

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

1) Ms Holden introduced the report.

2) Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted:

- Part of the current contract and moving forward was workforce development, with an element looking at recognising 'hidden' young carers.
- The provider had continued to over-deliver on the contract and did outreach into school and other settings to develop their skillset as well as the skillset of other partners. Attendance of training was being monitored and it had increased since sessions had been delivered online.
- Further work was to be done in collaboration with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services to look at whether this work could be further extended and a further report was to be brought to the Cabinet Committee.

3) RESOLVED to agree to note the report.

**61. Swale Secondary Provision. Temporary expansions of Sittingbourne
Secondary Schools for September 2022 and September 2023
(Item 17)**

Nick Abrahams (Area Education Officer - West Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1) Members asked questions and it was noted:

- There were Kent and national benchmarks for school places; permanent places or on a temporary basis for 'bulges' in the numbers of pupils.
- Concerns were raised about the impact of the temporary expansions on transport.

2) RESOLVED to agree the recommendation in the report.

62. Proposed Expansion of Snowfields Academy

(Item 18)

1) RESOLVED to agree the recommendation in the report.

63. Proposal to permanently expand Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Abbey Place, Faversham, ME13 7BQ from 150 to 180 places for September 2023 (allocation of funding)

(Item 19)

1) RESOLVED to agree the recommendation in the report.

64. Allocation of Additional Basic Needs Capital Funding Towards Proposed Expansion of Invicta Grammar School

(Item 20)

1) RESOLVED to agree the recommendation in the report.

65. Information report on Academy Trust consultations and projects in East Kent

(Item 21)

1) RESOLVED to agree the recommendation in the report.

66. Proposal to change use of Garlinge Children's Centre building to provide a 16 place Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as part of Garlinge Primary School and Nursery and that will serve Thanet children with ASD

(Item 22)

Nick Abrahams (Area Education Officer - West Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1) Members asked questions and it was noted:

- There would not be any change or decrease in the activities of the Children's Centre but Members raised concerns that the additional hours being provided at Birchington were not adequate due to the distance from Garlinge.
- There had been significant engagement with the community including a leaflet drop and drop-in sessions. The majority of responses had been very positive.

2) RESOLVED to agree the recommendation in the report.

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

67. Ofsted Update
(Item 23)

Stuart Collins, Director of Integrated Children's Services (West Kent and Early Help and Preventative Services Lead) was in attendance for this item.

1) Members asked questions and the following was noted:

- Extensive school improvement work was being undertaken through The Education People with Pupil Referral Units.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

68. Work Programme
(Item 24)

1) Members noted the work programme.