

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, 10th May, 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, Rich Lehmann, Mr S C Manion, Dr L Sullivan, Mr M Reidy and Mr D Ross

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Beart, Mr Sandhu and Ms McArthur for whom Mr Ross was present.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2022
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held on 1 March 2022 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4. Performance Monitoring
(Item 5)

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence; Mark Walker, Director for SEND and Christine McInnes, Director for Education were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report.

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

- Schools were being advised on strategies and support was being put in place for dealing with pupil behaviour. Schools were being supported through the Reconnect Programme. Some pupils were suffering from severe anxiety linked to the Covid-19 pandemic and longer-term support was being put in place. It was expected that some of the issues would settle in the next school year. Information from schools was being monitored.

- Part of the Reconnect funding had been used to focus on Free for Two (FF2) funding applications and these applications were being analysed to look at which families were taking up the offers of places.
- There was a major recruitment campaign for Children's Services and the responses from the Children's Social Work Survey had been analysed and learning would be applied.
- There was a high proportion of Newly Qualified Social Workers – which was positive for the future but they had protected caseloads meaning that other social workers had higher workloads during this period. There was also work ongoing around the retention of social workers in Kent. Another factor affecting caseloads was the number of social workers on maternity leave.
- Consideration was to be given to whether some kind of award could be offered to schools who excelled with ideas for helping children from poorer backgrounds.
- Concerns were raised about the performance of Pupil Referral Units.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

5. Ofsted Update *(Item 6)*

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

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report.

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

- It was queried whether there could be improvement targets set for primary, secondary and PRU in the same way as for Early Years.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

6. SEND Update *(Item 7)*

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

1) Mr Walker outlined the update.

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

- There had been an article in the Kent Online where officers' comments had been taken out of context and the article did not reflect the views of officers and the investment that had been put into building trusting relationships with schools. It was felt that the way forward was based on partnership between KCC, schools, parents and carers.
- There was insufficient capacity in the SEND transport system to meet the demand and measures were being taken to take pressure off the system in order that focus could be given to children with SEND who required transport. Work was ongoing to put provision in place for the coming school

year. However, this work was affected by what was happening in the market and some of this was beyond KCC's control.

- Consultations on the green paper were open until July. It would take time for items from the green paper to become requirements for local authorities. Some of these new requirements were already ambitions or in place as a target at KCC and work was ongoing on these areas.
- The KCC Budget contained funding for SEND redesign.

3) RESOLVED to note the update.

7. 22/00047 - Educational Psychology - Recommission service for increased capacity
(Item 8)

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

1) Ms Holden outlined the report. It was proposed that the service be recommissioning for a 1-year contract with the option of a further 1-year extension.

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

- The longer-term aim was for KCC to do assessments in-house and the length of the proposed contract reflected this. It was being considered how to support the service and reduce the number of EHCPs.
- Recruitment in educational psychology was difficult and there was a shortage of educational psychologists nationally. Recruitment was ongoing and there were Educational Psychologists in training, placed within the service.
- Work had been done to redesign Educational Psychology and to adapt practice. The contract related to the statutory element of the work. However, there was a proportion of work that was targeted core, preventative work enabling children to have their meets met without the need for a EHCP assessment.

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

8. School Term Dates for 2023-24 and Update on Queen's Jubilee Celebrations
(Item 9)

Ian Watts, Area Education Officer (North Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Watts introduced the report and explained that the Queen's Jubilee was not relevant and that the recommendations related only to the school term dates for 2023-24.

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

- The response rate to consultation was low. Many do not respond as it does not affect them as academies can choose their own term dates.

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

9. Pocket Money and Savings Policy for Children and young people in care - ensuring all children in care have a financial "Nest Egg" investment as part of their transition to adulthood

(Item 10)

Caroline Smith, Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Smith outlined the report.

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

- A Junior ISA was opened for children in care once they had been in care for 12 months. A £200 donation was added into the account by the government, in line with their current policy. This was held by the Share Foundation. If the child was of a certain age, they would have a Child Trust Fund, instead of a Junior ISA, this was also held with the Share Foundation.
- The challenge to the policy relating to pocket money and savings had come through the Corporate Parenting Panel from the young people in care, through a challenge card that they did not all have the same consistent financial savings. The proposal was for money to be taken at source following a lot of work on the technical systems, to enable this process to happen.
- Children were still able to have a savings bank account, to use in their childhood, the Junior ISA savings were for their adulthood, to be accessed when they reached the age of 18 years. Young people were allocated a Personal Advisor in the 18+ Care Leavers service who would support them to access their 'nest egg' at 18 years old.

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

10. Kent Locally Agreed Religious Education Syllabus 2022-2027 - Update

(Item 11)

Joel Cook, Democratic Services Manager was in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Cook introduced the item. A written update would be provided to July's meeting.

2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

11. 22/00036 - SACRE Membership Update

(Item 12)

Joel Cook, Democratic Services Manager was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Cook outlined the report.

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

- The legislation did not include those groups that were not considered organised religious groups. However, views of different groups were taken into account in the work of SACRE.

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

12. 22/00044 - Proposal to make prescribed changes to St Nicholas (Community) Special School from September 2022
(Item 13)

Marisa White, Area Education Officer (East Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms White outlined the report.

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

- There was support for this proposal as it was inclusive, gave the opportunity for teachers to 'upskill' and utilised an unused building.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

13. 22/00043 - Proposal to make prescribed changes to Meadowfield (Foundation) Special School from September 2022
(Item 14)

Marisa White, Area Education Officer (East Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms White outlined the report.

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

- There had been comments from those objecting to the proposals about the Ofsted rating of the satellite primary school. The school had joined the Island Academy Trust and was on an improvement journey to be rated 'Good' and was making excellent progress.
- The primary school had been built for 2 entries and had been running around 1.5 forms of entry. The classrooms proposed for use were in their own area of the school. There was to be a lead teacher, a teacher for each of 2 classes and a Specialist Teaching Assistant.
- There was a meeting scheduled for detailed discussions regarding staffing and curriculum provision.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

14. 22/00042 - Proposal to Permanently Expand Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School by 1FE from 150 to 180 PAN from September 2023
(Item 15)

Marisa White, Area Education Officer (East Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms White outlined the report. The proposal had been brought to Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee in January but had been brought back because of increased costs. The increase in costs was due to inflation. There were no changes to the programme and no issues had been raised from feasibility studies or surveys undertaken. Quantity surveyors had confirmed the increase in costs was due to inflation. Members were asked to endorse the draft funding agreement.

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

- There was error in the section of the report relating to Financial Implications at 3.1. The total figure should read £1,128,815.20.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

15. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members *(Item 16)*

1) Mrs Prendergast said there were challenges in regard to the overspends on the High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant - which was used to support Children with SEN with an accumulated overspend of over £100m.

As had recently been confirmed by Matt Dunkley at the Governance & Audit Committee, the Council had been invited to take part in the Safety Valve Programme conducted by the Department for Education. This programme was intended to support those Councils with the highest High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant Deficits in the development of a deficit recovery plan - aimed at reforming our High Needs System - and moving the Local Authority to a sustainable footing as quickly possible: along with agreeing additional funding to help pay off the accumulated deficit. The initial meeting with the DfE was expected to take place by the end of May 2022 and was to inform KCC's approach in both the further development of the plan - aligning this with KCC's SEN Strategy and finalising the financial agreement with the DfE over the coming months.

The DfE published its new White Paper, Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers in March 2022.

The paper set an ambitious target to improve school standards and through applying evidence-based practice and enabling collaborations between teachers, schools, and wider children's services so that every child was supported to realise their potential. There was an intention to reform the academy sector through statutory changes including the introduction of new trust standards and the government had confirmed its ambition that all schools should be in an academisation process by 2030. The DfE had also proposed Local Authority run Multi Academy Trusts - there was limited information but more detail was expected imminently.

KCC was taking the lead in developing a co-constructed action plan to help young people achieve their goals after leaving school by providing better pathways to post-16 education, skills, and training.

This followed an in-depth review into the post-16 offer in the county, commissioned by KCC to develop a deeper and shared understanding of the issues faced by both young people and education, skills, and training providers. Students, their parents, schools, colleges, and training providers were among the many people who took part in the interviews, surveys, and consultation work of the review.

The findings from the review offered a unique and up-to-date insight into the challenges and experiences of young people and post-16 providers.

Mrs Prendergast had been very encouraged by the participation in the review and the response to the findings, conclusion, and recommendations. There was a clear desire and commitment across the sector to look afresh at post-16 provision and collaborate to improve the offer and experience for young people - making Kent a county that worked for all 16 to 19 year olds.

Families had continued to arrive in Kent through the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine. Admissions guidance had been provided to schools and the admissions team was supporting individual cases as appropriate. Wider guidance and advice was available through The Education People. KCC was awaiting further information from DfE about funding to support the education of Ukrainian children, but this was not a unique position with many schools in Kent already having welcomed refugee children, and existing good practice was being applied.

Mrs Prendergast and Ian Watts visited a number of recently opened primary schools within the considerable development coming forward in the Ebbsfleet area - and all of them embraced being at the centre of their new and diverse communities. School leaders shared the challenges posed by the pandemic and those that were emerging. Without exception, all showed tremendous resolve to be inclusive of children regardless of their ability and to ensure that they were fully supported and very much part of the school community. Thanks were given to school leaders, staff and children at Springhead, Ebbsfleet Green, River Mill and Cherry Orchard Primary schools for their welcome and for all their good work.

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

- Young people had been actively involved in the in-depth review into post-16 provision.
- No issues had been reported regarding delays in children coming from Ukraine being placed in schools.

3) Mrs Chandler said she had recently met the Children's Social Work Teams in Swale and Gravesham and listen to some of the issues that face our social workers. The impact of lockdown was still being felt by KCC's front-line workers, Thanks were given to the Children's Social Work teams for their continued hard work.

The most recent decisions that had either been taken or were in the midst of being taken by other lead members that also fall within the CYPE directorate were outlined.

- 22/00051 Procurement of the Bespoke Support Service – This decision was due to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health. Members were to have the opportunity to comment on this decision as part of the normal decision process.
- 22/00034 - External Community Opportunities for People with Learning and Physical Disabilities – Again, this decision was due to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health. Members were to have the opportunity to comment on this decision as part of the normal decision process.
- 22/00040 - Domestic Abuse Duty: 2022 to 2023 funding – This decision was due to be taken by the Leader. Members were to have the opportunity to comment on this decision as part of the normal decision process.

Mrs Chandler said a huge well done to Caroline Smith and her team for organising the Education, Training and Employment Care Leaver event on 28 April. As Corporate parents, KCC supported over 2000 care leavers and it was a fantastic opportunity to be joined by some of Kent's Care leavers to learn about what more could be done to help support these young adults to reach their full potential in life.

The Virtual School Kent awards nominations were open. The award categories included outstanding or greatly improved:

- academic achievement
- engagement and/or attitude towards learning
- education, training, or employment placement
- contribution to the community
- or Wider achievements of note

The deadline to make a nomination for Year 12, Year 13 and for KCC Care Leavers was Friday 3 June. Nominations for Early Years and Year R to Year 11 closed on Friday 8 July.

KCC were promoting Mental Health Awareness week which ran from 9 to 15 May. The theme for this year's Mental Health Awareness Week was loneliness. Supporting young people in recognising when they were feeling lonely, understanding their thoughts and feelings, and identifying the supportive connections they had, was really important.

There were a range of ways in which Kooth (*a support service which provided anonymous and personalised mental health support for children and young people*) could support this week, and it was all free. This included assemblies, a range of workshops and training staff in confidently signposting young people to the service.

Further information about Kooth was available online and Members were encouraged to disseminate this to appropriate persons.

16. Work Programme
(Item 17)

1) Members noted the work programme.