

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, 29th November, 2022.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr A Brady, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr S C Manion, Ms M McArthur, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr P Stepto, Dr L Sullivan, Mr M Reidy and Mr Q Roper

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Jeffrey and Mr Beaney.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

Dr Sullivan declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 11.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2022
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2022 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 5)

1) Mr Love said that the full validated results had not yet been published but around 17,000 children sat the Kent Test in 2022, compared with around 16,000 in 2021. Of that, 5,517 were children living in other local authority areas. There were 5,566 grammar school places available across the county and in most cases, priority over places was to be given to those who were Kent residents.

Mr Love congratulated children who had passed, whilst assuring those who were unsuccessful that Kent had a wide range of excellent non-selective schools to choose from.

The deadline for secondary school admission applications closed on Monday 31 October. Parents and guardians could expect to find out what school their child had been offered on Wednesday, 1 March.

For primary school places, applications opened on Friday, 4 November and were to remain open until Monday, 16 January. This was to apply to any child due to start primary or infant school (reception year) in September 2023, or a child moving from

year 2 of an infant school to year 3 of a junior school in September 2023. Primary offers were to be confirmed on Monday, 17 April.

There had been coverage of the shortage of school places in some year groups within the districts of Ashford and Canterbury due to the housing of asylum seekers and other migrants in hotels within the area, which included school aged children which KCC as the local authority needed to accommodate.

The extent of this pressure was not something which had been foreseen in previous commissioning plans, but it was something being factored in with forward planning for school places across both districts as part of the Commissioning Plan for Education 2023-27.

The current Ofsted inspection framework (following its review) had resulted in a number of formerly Outstanding schools being judged as Good following a significant number of years since their previous inspection.

Since September 2021, 21 secondary schools had graded Ofsted inspections and 71% (15 schools) had retained their good judgement or improved their judgement to Good. Six schools had a decline in their outcome - three formerly Outstanding academy schools were judged Good (Dane Court, Cranbrook, The Skinners) and one was judged as Requiring Improvement (High Weald). Two academy schools were judged Inadequate (the Oasis Academy and The Abbey).

Whilst this was a concern, it was noted that in some cases a lower grade had been given due to a school failing in just 1 of 5 assessed categories. Schools took all feedback received from Ofsted very seriously and KCC remained on hand to support them.

CYPE continued to chair a cross-directorate Home to School Transport Board to ensure clear, formal communications and planning capacity was in place to meet the growing challenges facing the Council. Members had been advised of the crisis facing the UK transport sector and these pressures were set to increase as a result of growing financial challenges on both providers and KCC.

KCC was shortly to exceed 6,000 eligible SEN pupils requiring KCC provided vehicles, with roughly an additional 1000 eligible pupils being supported by alternative schemes. With around 100 new SEN pupils becoming entitled to free school transport each month, Members were advised of the growing potential for unavoidable delays in the provision of new transport, which would fall outside KCC's power to avoid.

The Home to School Transport Board continued to work to reduce the chances of these delays and Mr Love was to continue to monitor the sector.

The results from the inclusivity survey sent out to parents back in June 2022 had been published and 419 responses were received, of which 208 of these were from parents whose child/ren had Additional or Special Educational Needs.

Across the board there was a majority of positive responses received to almost all questions posed, highlighting the excellent work that many Kent schools were doing. 71% responded positively when asked if they believed their child's school was helping them to make good progress, with a 72.6% positive response rate

when asked if they believed the child's school has helped them to take an active part in school learning.

However, some clear areas for improvement had also been highlighted, with only 50% of those surveyed responding positively when asked if their child's school was good taking the child's views into account during any discussions about their educational needs. All the feedback received was to be used to shape future KCC decisions and influence change, in conjunction with parent groups.

A new inclusive education survey was live on kent.gov.uk and schools and academies were encouraged to make parents aware of it so a greater response rate could be achieved. Results were to be gathered at the end of January 2023 and distributed to all schools.

Mr Love and Mrs Chandler made a visit to Woodpecker Court outside Dover, where students start the day before lessons under a parachute and gather again under the parachute at the end of the day to review their work and progress.

Mr Love was pleased to be invited and attended the Kent Association of Head Teachers' Conference. Mr Love found the guest speakers at the conference inspiring, particularly Ann Daniels, a polar explorer.

2) Mrs Chandler said that as of 25 November, there had been 75 UASC referrals since the start of the month, with the total for 2022 being 1305.

KCC still retained responsibility for 464 UASC, plus a further 34 who were unaccompanied non-citizen children but were not currently claiming asylum. More hotels were currently opening around the country and it was hoped this would gradually reduce the pressure on Kent.

The 0-5 Strategy Task and Finish Group was to get underway shortly, focusing on important topics such as the best start to life agenda, the rise in EHCP applications and the promotion of free childcare. This was to be a cross-party group and 10 Members were to participate. Invitations were to be sent out to participating Members and the aim was to conclude during the first quarter of 2023.

On Thursday, 27 October, Mrs Chandler attended the Aspirations, Pledges & Opportunities event for care leavers. She attended the first pledge event and was inspired then, and continued to be inspired by Kent's care leavers aspirations and achievements, and by the commitment of all of them. It was a very powerful and inspiring afternoon.

Mrs Chandler was pleased to hear how KCC departments were exploring their role as corporate parents and she was looking forward to seeing this develop even further. She said it was also great to see the collective approach between KCC and its partner organisations.

A range of pledges were made with the aim of further enhancing the experience for care leavers. There will be a further event in October 2023, again in National Care Leavers Week.

The Foster Carers Awards took place on Friday, 4 November, and Mrs Chandler congratulated all those who received awards and acknowledged the amazing work of foster carers across Kent.

Kent Fostering was always looking for new foster carers and anyone interested was encouraged to attend one of the online information events. The next event was due to take place on Tuesday, 13 December at 7pm. More details were available on the Kent Fostering website.

Members' attention was drawn to the KCC Christmas Appeal which, in conjunction with the Young Lives Foundation, was aiming to raise £20,000 to provide a £10 gift voucher to every care leaver in Kent.

Mrs Chandler shared a quote from a care leaver:

Being a care leaver is not easy. It's daunting and scary to say the least, let alone the fact you're totally on your own. It's nice to know people out there really care.

Thanks were given to the members of the KCC staff lottery which had donated almost £4,000, and to everyone else who has donated so far. The appeal had raised around 40% of the £20,000 target, so it was urged that those who had not done so yet and could afford to, consider donating towards this very worthy cause. Details are on KNet, or ylf.org.uk/christmas.

2) Further to Mr Love's update, the following questions and points were raised:

- It was requested that journey times for children receiving home-to-school transport be looked at and the impact of longer journey times on children.
- Kent PACT representatives, Alison White and Vicky Evans asked questions regarding the 0-5 Task and Finish Group and Strategy and commented regarding the Care Leavers' event.

5. Performance Monitoring

(Item 6)

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence; Dan Bride, Assistant Director – Adolescent and Open Access; Stuart Collins, Director of Integrated Children's Services; Stephen Fitzgerald, Assistant Director – Integrated Children's Services, East Kent and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of SEND

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report. The scorecard contained some of the updated attainment data for the summer of 2022 which was available at the time it was put together. There was provisional data for the primary key stages and for key stage 4. Since the publication of the scorecard, some early provisional data had been made available for post-16. The final data was due to be published later in the year for primary key stages and key stage 4 data was due to be published in February 2023.

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

- Further data was requested where there was great variation in areas across the county, including more detail about the backlog of EHCPs. It was reported that a lack of educational psychology resource and staffing within SEND services had impacted on the production of EHCPs. The challenges were being felt nationwide in addition to their being challenges specific to Kent, including a SEND restructure within KCC.
- Qualified Social Workers (permanent and agency staff) had specific social care caseloads and they were not the staff producing EHCPs. These staff were not involved beyond contributing to the one element of the EHCPs, social care advice. It was recognised social work was challenging and in some areas of Kent such as Thanet, qualified social workers were actively being head-hunted and were moving into private fostering agency work.
- Information was requested about Pupil Referral Units.
- Work was being undertaken with Kent Police around the quality of data relating to youth justice. There was also due to be a new suite of key performance indicators for youth justice, which would be using the national framework to inform the data reported to Members.
- Key Performance Indicators and targets were being reviewed and updated. These were to be reported to Members.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

6. Ofsted Update (Item 7)

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

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report.

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

- Many schools had not been inspected for many years. However, the rate of inspections had increased and a number of schools had been inspected since September 2022. There had not been a formal announcement from Ofsted about this.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

7. SEND update (Item 8)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of CYPE and Ben Watts, General Counsel were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Love introduced the report regarding the Ofsted and CQC revisit of the Local Area Services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

2) Ms Hammond presented the slides (attached).

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

- The children's health workforce had been redeployed during 2020 and 2021 to assist with the Covid-19 pandemic and this had an impact on areas of work with children.
- The Improvement Board meetings took place during the pandemic but less often and there were frequent changes of health personnel for those meetings. PACT was part of the Improvement Board.
- Some children with SEND, particularly those with high level or complex health needs had remained at home during the early period of the pandemic.
- It was recognised where things had not gone well, and the inspector's findings were accepted. It was accepted that there were cases where KCC was too slow in resolving individual cases. It had been very challenging for frontline staff and at times, the level of work was overwhelming, so it was important moving forward that there was the right system in place.
- The Accelerated Progress Plan was to re-frame the failings identified by the revisit in a meaningful and measurable way. The Department for Education and NHS England were to have oversight over the Accelerated Progress Plan. The SEND Partnership Assurance Board was to be established – KCC awaited further information from government about whether the Secretary of State was to use his powers of intervention.
- More engagement with and listening to families was suggested as a way of moving forward following the revisit.
- Statutory guidance was being consulted to ensure that this was applied to the EHCP assessment process. Some Members had expressed concerns that it was difficult to progress while there was a backlog of assessments for EHCPs.
- In situations where it was felt that particular requirements of an EHCP were not being fulfilled by school placements, there was support for parents to approach schools with issues and to enable schools to meet the requirements. There was an annual review process in place for EHCPs.
- Decisions about non-executive sub-committees of Scrutiny were a non-executive matter for the Scrutiny Committee, rather than a matter for Cabinet to consider.
- Issues around SEND were at the top of KCC's priorities corporately moving forward. It was felt that changes had been made since 2019 but the improvements had not been fully realised at the time of the revisit.

4) RESOLVED to note the update and contents of the report.

Dr Sullivan and Mr Brady asked for it to be recorded that they did not support the recommendations.

8. Kent Commissioning Plan Update *(Item 9)*

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

1) Mr Love introduced the report.

2) Mr Abrahams outlined the report.

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

- There was significant pressure on the Capital programme and the pressure had increased due to inflation. KCC was lobbying government on the basis that funding needed to reflect the challenges.
- The commissioning intentions outlined in this year's commissioning plan relating to specialist places likely reflected a proportion of what the future commissioning intentions would be for specialist places, as a whole. The DfE had only requested information about mainstream school capacity and demand but moving forward, it was seeking for local authorities to submit forecasts for specialist places and report on capacity. There were ongoing conversations with the DfE and more information would be submitted as part of the Safety Valve process, including data around specialist places.
- Where children have a place in a specialist satellite provision in a mainstream school, they would be on roll at the special school. Therefore, these children would not be included in the inclusion data, however, they would benefit from the culture of inclusion in the setting.

4) RESOLVED to endorse the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2023-27.

9. Adolescent Response Team and the extension of the project
(Item 10)

Stuart Collins, Integrated Children's Services (Early Help Lead) and Dan Bride, Assistant Director were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Collins introduced and Ms Bride outlined the report.

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

- £586,000 had been agreed per year for 2 years for the Adolescent Response Team project. £101,000 had been drawn down in the first year, 2021-22. The underspend was around £485,000 which was nearly a year's funding so it was considered that the project could be extended for another year.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

10. Commissioned Youth Provision - Direct Award
(Item 11)

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

1) Ms Holden outlined the report.

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

- There had been wider work on reviewing community services service development. A further decision would be made when KCC was in a position to re-evaluate Commissioned Youth Provision taking into consideration Family Hubs.

- Comments, complaints and compliments from service users were sent by service providers to KCC for monitoring.

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

11. Commissioned Children's Centre Provision - Direct Award
(Item 12)

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

1) Ms Holden outlined the report.

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

- It was recognised that consistency of quality of provision across the county was needed. However, needs across communities in Kent were different so it was consistency of quality based on need that was the focus.

3) RESOLVED to agree

12. Local Children's Partnership Group Grant Funding
(Item 13)

1) Mrs Chandler introduced the report.

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

- The timing of the proposed decision took into account that Local Children's Partnership Groups were in the process of setting their priorities in allocating their funding. The proposal to withdraw funding was still to go through KCC's budget setting process.

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

13. LADO Annual Report
(Item 14)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of CYPE was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Hammond outlined the report.

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

- Concerns were raised about where there were allegations of physical or other abuse, 52% of these cases involved a children with SEND.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

14. Private Fostering Annual Report 2021-2022
(Item 15)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of CYPE was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Hammond outlined the report.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

15. 22/00104 - Direct Payment Support Services for Children and Young People - Contract Extension
(Item 16)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services) and Steve Lusk, Senior Commissioner were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Holden outlined the report.

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

- The CYPE directorate did not have an in-house team. However, work was being undertaken with the Adults' team on a self-directed support work group.

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

16. Decisions Taken Outside of Committee Cycle
(Item 17)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of CYPE was in attendance for this item.

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

- The Family Hub model was about making services more accessible and providing a digital offer. A distinction was made about the difference between a digital offer, access to information digitally and a virtual offer which referred to accessing services virtually. The need would also continue for a face-to-face offer and for outreach. Negotiations with Public Health partners were ongoing and there would also need to be negotiation with other partners moving forward.
- Concerns were raised that Members had not had sight of the decision at the previous Cabinet Committee meeting.

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

17. Work Programme
(Item 18)

1) Members noted the work programme.