

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 Wednesday, 8th March, 2023.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr A Brady, Mr G Cooke, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Dr L Sullivan, Mr M Reidy and Mr H Rayner

OTHER MEMBERS: Sarah Hudson

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Canon Dr Roper, Mrs Dean, Mrs McArthur, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Manion and Mr Jeffery for whom Mr Rayner was present.

Ms Ainslie-Malik, Mrs Moses, Ms Bruneau, Mr Stepto, Mr Beaney and Mrs Hamilton participated virtually.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

Mrs Hamilton declared an interest in agenda item 10.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2023
(Item 4)

1) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2023 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

2) It was noted that Ms Ainslie-Malik was present virtually.

4. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 5)

1) Mrs Chandler said that she was pleased to be giving her update on International Women's Day and the hashtag being used on social media was: #embraceequity. She had been to Discovery Park to the Skills Hub – it had been very successful in encouraging young people and in particular, girls to participate in science. Early participation was being encouraged.

The Social Connections Service took a group of over 30 UASC young people on a special trip to the Oval Cricket Ground in half term. They all had a lovely, recorded welcome from International Cricketer and Afghan, T201 Captain, Rashid Khan. An interpreter was provided who supported them on a tour of the grounds and the museum.

They played cricket with coaches from the Oval, who identified three of them as having extraordinary skill. Some of the young people had the opportunity to work on an iMac editing tool. Since then, the Oval had been in touch with the offer of the group going back for a T20 game in the summer.

There had been record for the month of February in terms of the number of UASC arrivals, totalling 113. The previous record was 92 which was in 2022.

As of 3 March, the total number of UASC arrivals for 2023 was 189, so roughly on par with the same time in 2022. Of the 99 UASC referrals made in the previous 4 weeks, 42 of these had been identified as coming from Afghanistan, the youngest of which was aged just 11 years old.

Mrs Chandler said Medway Council had made a legal challenge to the Home Office in respect of accepting UASCs when the mandation was introduced. Medway Council's challenge had not been successful and the outcome strengthened the National Transfer Scheme.

On Wednesday 22 February, Mrs Chandler visited the Front Door Team at Kroner House in Ashford. She was encouraged by the positive attitudes and level of knowledge shown by all the staff she met, and she could see how dedicated and determined they were to ensure the safety of Kent's children and young people. The strong working relationships that were in place with colleagues from Kent Police were also noted. Thanks were given to every member of the Front Door team for their continued hard work.

Members were reminded everyone has a role to play in ensuring the safeguarding of children in Kent, so should anyone have any concerns about the welfare of a child, they were asked to please call 03000 41 11 11 or email social.services@kent.gov.uk and the Front Door team were on hand to investigate. Members were reminded that where a child is in immediate danger, to please call 999 in the first instance.

2) Mr Love said that secondary school offer day for children across Kent was on 1 March. There had been a record number of applications, totalling 22,620, an increase of over 700.

The number of Kent pupils offered a place at their first-preference school went up by 291 to 14,865 although the percentage had fell slightly from 79.59% to 78.21%.

However, the number and percentages of those being offered their second, third or fourth choices went up, so the percentage of those allocated a place at a school for which they did not make a preference at all fell to under 5% - the lowest since 2018.

Thanks and congratulations were given to the KCC staff in the admissions team who, every year, worked tirelessly to try to meet the secondary school choices of so many pupils and parents.

KCC supported all those who did not receive one of their 4 choices and had allocated an alternative school accordingly. For those who were unhappy with their

allocation, applicants were advised to request to join the waiting list of any school they wanted to be considered for by Wednesday 15 March.

Any appeals for named schools had to be lodged with KCC by Tuesday 28 March to be heard on time. KCC was to hold a second round of offers on Tuesday, 25 April, for any spaces that had become available. KCC staff were ready to answer any questions that parents and carers had throughout the remainder of the application process, and were available to offer information, advice and support.

Details of what parents and carers needed to do regarding all of these processes were outlined in the emails and letters they received on offer day.

The first two meetings of the Kent SEND Strategic Improvement and Assurance Board had taken place, chaired by Deborah Glassbrook, an independent SEND adviser from the Local Government Association.

Mr Love said that this was a valuable tool in helping KCC to deliver the improvements that were underway in the nine areas of weakness identified in the 2019 Local Area SEND Inspection and the Inspection Revisit (2022). The Board would hold all partners to account, to make sure improvements were achieved. Thanks were given to all participants of the Board for their input so far.

KCC was to provide support during the Easter holidays via the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) which would be available to children who received benefits-related free school meals, and to other vulnerable children. This was to be in the form of free holiday club places and food support. More details were to be made available nearer the time.

Kent was set to receive £5.56m from the government in the current financial year so work was to be undertaken to ensure every penny was put to the best possible use to help those who needed support the most during these challenging times.

The Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing, Claire Coutinho, had also announced the first annual HAF Awards. The HAF 2023 Awards would recognise outstanding HAF providers and showcase some of the innovative and effective practice. Kent as a local authority was to have the opportunity to nominate any providers who delivered excellent service to children and young people over the holiday periods. Members and staff were encouraged to make nominations to showcase some of the fantastic work taking place across Kent.

On Tuesday, 21st February, Mr Love visited Hadlow College, part of the North Kent Further Education offer, alongside the Director of Education, Christine McInnes.

With the upcoming reclassification of colleges in England to public sector bodies, Mr Love was keen to ensure KCC built stronger partnerships Further Education providers across the country. He was looking forward to taking the opportunity to visit other college campuses over the coming year.

5. Performance Monitoring *(Item 6)*

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence; Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of CYPE; Stuart Collins and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report.

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

- Kent's attainment data had been compared to national data, as there had been gaps in the data due to the pandemic. It was noted that the largest gap in attainment was with children receiving free school meals. A number of programmes and commissioned services were in place to address this. There was also a review of The Education People (TEP) services around school improvement.
- There were national challenges around both attendance and exclusions. Additional resources had been put into the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS).
- There was discussion about data and using data effectively, to 'sense check' what is being seen at operational level and to give early indicators of when there was a change of trajectory in a particular area of work. The data being provided should assist Members to ask the 'right' questions.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

6. Ofsted Update *(Item 7)*

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

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report.

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

- Concerns were raised about the standards at grammar schools in Kent. There were some projects ongoing. The first looking at inclusion within grammar schools and the sharing of good practice on this. Another was looking at academy groups that had mixed selective and non-selective schools, with mixed selective and non-selective leaders learning across the piste, sharing good practice around attainment. It was important work in terms of informing KCC's policy for academisation and models of working.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

7. Risk Management: Children's, Young People and Education *(Item 8)*

Mark Scrivener, Corporate Risk & Assurance Manager and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director for CYPE, were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Scrivener outlined the report.

2) Further to questions and comments from Members

- It was clarified that when the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi Agency Partnership (KSCMP) reported to the Cabinet Committee, this included the reports of the Independent Scrutineer.
- There was an agreement in place with the Home Office capping the numbers of UASCs being looked after on a temporary basis. It remained a challenge and the High Court judgement ruling that Medway Council had to participate in the National Transfer Scheme was welcomed.

3) RESOLVED to agree the recommendations.

8. Contracts Register (Item 9)

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 that:

- A request was made for more information and detail about the contracts register.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

9. Proposed Revision of Rates Payable and Charges Levied for Children's Services in 2023-24 (Item 10)

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

1) Mrs Hamilton declared an interest in this agenda item.

2) Ms Stone outlined the report.

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

10. Independent Adoption Support Services (Item 11)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services) and Madeline Bishop, Commissioner (Children and Young People)

1) Ms Holden outlined the report.

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

- There was ongoing work. And comprehensive framework of capturing feedback.
- Other local authorities in the country were looking to use the approach that had been used in Kent. It was felt it was very valuable to have an independent commissioned service providing this sensitive work with families whose children have been removed, adoptive parents and adopted children.
- The funding arrangements for the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) were in place up to 2025 but it was expected that arrangements would continue.

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

11. Family Hub Transformation Funding

(Item 12)

Hema Birdi, Assistant Director (Adolescents and Open Access); Stuart Collins, Director of Integrated Children's Services and David Adams, Area Education Officer were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Collins introduced the report.

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

- A summary of the delivery plan and a breakdown of the requirements stipulated by Department for Education (DfE) had been provided previously. The provision had continued to be delivered from children's centres and youth hubs – the model of delivery had not changed but work was being undertaken with partners to move to a new model of delivery.
- Parents, carers and young people were being consulted with about the form that Family Hubs would take. All information was being taken into account to develop, with KCC's partners, what the Family Hubs would look like.
- KCC had not applied for the Youth Investment Fund. The initial work had not identified gaps in provision where an application for this funding was appropriate. The Youth Investment Fund was a capital stream of funding rather than a revenue stream and therefore, it was questioned how services could be supported without finding additional revenue funding.
- It was highlighted that the report presented was about places and spaces, not delivery. Further information would be brought to the Cabinet Committee as progress was made.

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

12. Additional funding required to complete the satellite provision of The Beacon, Folkestone at the former Walmer Science College

(Item 13)

David Adams, Area Education Officer (South Kent) was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Adams outlined the report.

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

- A number of factors had contributed to the increase in costs. The process that was used to estimate the costs previously had since changed and this had improved accuracy in estimating cost. There had been a change in the number of pupils proposed to be supported and there had been assumptions around the quality of existing buildings that had been too optimistic. The original cost estimate had been poor.

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

13. Expansion of Wrotham Academy
(Item 14)

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

1) Mr Abrahams outlined the report.

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

- Thanks were given to officers and to the Cabinet Member for their full consultation with local Members regarding this expansion.
- The final completion of the project was expected for the September 2025 entry. Elements of the scheme were to be completed before then and it was expected that some pupils would start in Year 7 from 2024, as accommodation allowed.

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

14. Allocation of additional basic need funding to permanently expand Borden Grammar School, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne, ME10 4DB from 120 places to 150 places for September 2024
(Item 15)

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

1) Ms White outlined the report.

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

- If the additional funding was not agreed by the Cabinet Member, the work relating to the kitchen and dining facilities would not be completed.

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

15. Complaints and Representations 2021-22
(Item 16)

Claire Thomson, Children's Complaint and Customer Care Manager and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of CYPE, were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Thomson outlined the report.

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

- Concerns were raised around support for staff. It was felt that an increase in complaints had been expected and the Children's Complaints and Customer Care Team were impartial but were as supportive as possible to staff who were subject to complaints. It was recognised that some complaints were about KCC as a whole and not individuals. The aim was to seek a resolution or at least an explanation where something had gone wrong with services.
- Concerns were being raised about the number of upheld complaints and it was questioned whether enough was being done to ensure lessons were learned.

Members were advised that lessons learned from complaints were part of service improvement.

- It was acknowledged that some complaints could not be addressed through this process – and KCC had to work in partnership with others also working with children. Some complaints could not be dealt with by the local authority, such as about specific schools or certain aspects of the EHCP process had to be addressed through tribunals.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

16. SACRE annual report
(Item 17)

RESOLVED to note the report.

17. Work Programme
(Item 18)

RESOLVED to agree the work programme.