

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### 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 Wednesday, 18th November, 2020.

PRESENT: Mrs L Game (Chairman), Mr D Murphy (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A D Allen, MBE, Mr M J Angell, Mr D L Brazier, Mrs P T Cole, Mr G Cooke, Mr J Constanti, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Ms S Hamilton, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr S C Manion, Mr M Reidy and Mr Q Roper

OTHER MEMBERS: Mrs Sue Chandler

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

**206. Membership**  
*(Item 2)*

It was noted that Mr Reidy had joined the Committee as a Co-Optee.

**207. Apologies and Substitutes**  
*(Item 3)*

Apologies were received from Ms Linfield, for whom Mr Bird was present.

**208. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda**  
*(Item 4)*

- (1) Mr Manion declared an interest as his partner worked for a special school in Dover.
- (2) Dr Sullivan declared an interest as her husband worked as an Early Help Worker for Kent County Council.

**209. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2020**  
*(Item 5)*

- (1) Mr D Adams (Director of Education) reported that all laptops received by KCC as part of the laptop scheme had been distributed.
- (2) It was confirmed that Members were sent an email with additional information regarding Kent's virtual youth offer as agreed at the last meeting.
- (3) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held on 22 September 2020 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

**210. 20/00107 - Educational Psychology - increased capacity of assessments**  
*(Item 6)*

*Ms C Holden (Lead Commissioning Manager – Children’s), Mr M Walker (Interim Director for SEND and Disabled Children and Young People) and Dr D Jones (Interim Head of Educational Psychology) were in attendance for this item.*

(1) Ms Holden introduced the report which set out recommendations regarding the award of a contract to deliver increased capacity of Educational Psychology assessments. It had been identified that additional support was required and a contract was to be awarded to a service provider in order to clear a backlog of assessments.

(2) Officers responded to questions and comments from Members and it was noted:

- It was anticipated that the backlog of assessments would be cleared by March 2021, if the level of demand were sustained. It was reported that the contract was for 1 year but there would be some flexibility around extending the contract. There would be a minimum of 40 assessments per month from the provider but an average of 70 assessments per month was anticipated.
- There was a national shortage of Educational Psychologists and difficulties in filling 10 vacant posts at KCC. However, 3 permanent Educational Psychologists had been recruited and were starting in September 2021.
- It was clarified for Members that ‘pieces of work’ referred to advice given outside of a full report being produced.
- There had been a large increase in demand for Educational Psychology assessments since 2014 but core staffing had not been increased and locum staff had been used. Early help and advice in the school setting would mean that some children’s needs would be met without an Educational Psychology assessment.
- There was discussion around whether a Special Educational Needs group for Members should be re-established as the previous group was not well attended.
- Dr Jones advised that he would report to Members what the longest waiting time had been for an assessment for an individual.

(3) It was RESOLVED that the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services to:

- (i) Award a contract (or contracts) in order to deliver Educational Psychology Assessments on behalf of Kent County Council to support the reduction of waiting times for the service; and,
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services to take relevant actions, as necessary to implement this decision,

be endorsed.

## **211. School Funding Formula Consultation** *(Item 7)*

*Ms Karen Stone (Interim Finance Business Partner for CYPE, Strategic and Corporate Services) was in attendance for this item*

(1) Ms Stone introduced the report and updated the Cabinet Committee regarding the consultation. It was a requirement to consult on all changes made to the School Funding Formula including the notional SEN budget calculation to reflect more recent changes to the formula. Normally, responses are received from 150 schools and it was being considered whether to extend the deadline in order that more responses be received. Those schools that had responded had supported the changes proposed.

(2) In response to questions, the following was noted:

- It was explained that schools must account for spending. OFSTED inspections had been halted due to the pandemic but it was reported that inspections were likely to resume after Christmas.
- Concerns were raised around funding rate for school meals and it was noted that prior attainment has been prioritised as it was generally considered to be a better measure of education disadvantage rather than children in receipt of free school meals.
- The School Funding Formula was only able to be adjusted within the national guidelines and boundaries were in place limiting how funding could be distributed. A minimum had been set for how much funding could be given to schools for each pupil.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**212. 20/00097 - Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2021-25**  
*(Item 8)*

*Mr Lee Round (Area Schools Organisation Officer) and David Adams (Interim Director Education) were in attendance for this item.*

(1) Mr Round introduced the report.

(2) In response to questions, it was noted that:

- KCC consistently worked with districts and developers through Section 106 Agreements to get the contributions required for both primary and secondary provision.
- It was anticipated that further capacity in schools would be needed over the following 5 years. There were difficulties due to the mechanism used with forward funding management. It was reported that it was easier to evidence the need for secondary places than primary places at the present time. There was a lag in timeframe between when the agreements were made and when contributions were available for the delivery of provision.
- Concerns were raised about provision of post-16 education and T-levels. KCC was not the provider of capital funding and revenue funding in the system for post-16 education but in some cases, did act as the provider and did have a role in influencing via the Post-16 Review. Further Education

colleges in Kent were the providers of T-levels as part of the national programme. There were fewer schools and colleges offering lower level qualifications and this was due to a change in requirements by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

- Housebuilding in villages made education provision more difficult, particularly in the case of primary schools. When agreeing contributions, the displacement argument might be used in these cases. Local Plans were important in securing developer contributions. Flexibility was increasingly possible due to the change in regulations, so contributions through Section 106 Agreements no longer had to be tied to a single project.
- Concerns were raised around travel to schools where provision is outside of the area that children are living, this was particularly a concern for those living in rural areas and for families with children in different schools.

(3) RESOLVED to endorse:

The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2021-25, prior to the final version being considered and approved by Cabinet on 27 January 2021.

### **213. SEND Implementation Programme** *(Item 9)*

*Mr Mark Walker (Interim Director of SEND) was in attendance for this item*

(1) Mr Walker introduced the report and in response to questions it was noted:

- Mrs Chandler gave reassurances around the continuity of the Improvement Board and that specialist expertise would be drawn on as appropriate to maintain progress with improvements.
- The draft SEND Strategy was to go out for consultation but would come to the Cabinet Committee for comment.
- There had been some issues with school nursing in some areas but every school would have sufficient nursing for their needs across the county.
- Mrs Chandler asked for emphasis to be given to the points made in the report regarding the progress that had been made with the SEND Implementation Programme, despite the effects of the pandemic. The significant progress made had been noted by the Department for Education (DFE) and National Health South East (NHSE).

(2) RESOLVED that the report and the updates provided by officers be noted.

### **214. Progress update re the provision of Supported Lodgings and Staying Put accommodation for Children and Young People aged 16-21 years (or up to 25 if in further education)** *(Item 10)*

(1) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **215. School Alterations/Expansions**

*(Item 11)*

*(Item 11a)*

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## **216. Performance Management Scorecard**

*(Item 12)*

*Mr M Dunkley (Corporate Director, Children Young People and Education) and Ms Atkinson (Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence) were in attendance for this item.*

(1) The scorecard was largely unchanged from the previous meeting due to the summer period and the pandemic.

Members were advised that information on those “Not in Education, Employment, or Training” (NEETs) had been added on a monthly basis and was indicated in red but this was subject to seasonal and will change as position settles in the autumn

(2) In response to questions, it was noted:

- Enrolment data was to be updated to show the impact of pandemic. It was unclear from the available data if the attainment gap had widened. It was thought that there were attainment gaps at Key Stages 2 and 4. However, it was not possible to confirm this without the national data.
- Mr Cooke asked for further information about the reach the Education People had with NEETs.

(3) RESOLVED that the information contained within the Performance Scorecard be noted.

## **217. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director**

*(Item 13)*

*Mr M Dunkley (Corporate Director, Children Young People and Education) was in attendance for this item.*

(1) Mrs Chandler (Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services) gave a verbal update on the following issues:

- **Kent Foster Carer Awards** - KCC held a virtual ceremony for annual Kent Foster Carer Awards, recognising the wonderful work undertaken by foster carers and staff. A record 149 nominations had been received and the nominations were open to others such as social workers, nurses and teachers, in addition to foster carers.

It was reported that more foster carers were needed in Kent and emphasis was given to the support that Kent foster carers received. Members were asked to encourage the recruitment of foster carers.

- **Adoption Partnership South East** - There was a virtual launch for the Adoption Partnership South East. Whilst it was formed in response to a government mandate that all local authorities must join a regional adoption agency by 2020, the agency brings together knowledge and expertise from the London Borough of Bexley, Medway Council and KCC. The focus was recruiting more adopters across the South East and accelerating the processes. More adopters were needed for children with additional needs.
- **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)** – Numbers of UASCs had dropped slowly but were double the safe level recommended by the Home Office. KCC was liaising with the Department for Education and the Home Office on an ongoing basis. The consultation had closed on the National Transfer Scheme and the results of were awaited.
- **Corporate Parenting Christmas Appeal** – In collaboration with the Young Lives Foundation, a fundraiser had been set up to give 1900 care leavers a Christmas gift and good progress had been made towards the fundraising target.

(2) Ms Hamilton gave a verbal update on behalf of Mr Long (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) on the following issues:

- **Free School Meals Scheme** - KCC had implemented its free school meals scheme, through a helpline and webpage to provide vouchers to eligible families over half term. This was done at very short notice by working with partners and they were able to reach out to those the scheme was intended to help and approximately 20,000 £15 food vouchers, redeemable at Asda or Tesco, were issued to families.
- **The Kent Test** – The Kent Test dates went ahead as planned but for those who were not able to sit tests due to Covid-19, further sessions were arranged to ensure all registered applicants could be tested. The process was designed in order that wider individual circumstances were considered and minimised risks of children being at a disadvantage in comparison to their peers.

The Headteacher Assessment process had been fully digitised and panels were meeting. The results of the Kent Test were on track to be released to parents by the 26 November 2020.

(3) Mr Dunkley gave a verbal update on the following issues:

- **Covid-19 Pandemic** – The effects on schools had been harder during the second wave of the pandemic and due to rises in infections, decisions had been made around closing to year groups or closing schools very rapidly. It was recognised that schools would struggle in the period up to Christmas as there would be a 'knock on' effect with years groups being sent home, schools closing, staff illness and staff self-isolating, working from home. Tributes were paid and thanks given to schools and the teams supporting schools, for the work and the resilience staff had shown.

(4) In response to the updates, the following points were noted:

- The Free School Meals Scheme at half term was implemented at short notice in around 48 hours, using existing arrangements with Asda and Tesco. The teams were looking ahead to Christmas with options to support families and to make it easy for families to benefit from the vouchers. It was queried whether links could be made with foodbanks and links were being considered through district councils to foodbanks.
- Close work was being undertaken with schools to help them to manage Covid-19 outbreaks and to encourage a consistent approach. KCC was offering consistent advice to schools but school closures had been rare. Work was being done with schools on the offer for key worker children, where year groups had been sent home or school closure was necessary.

(5) RESOLVED that the verbal updates be noted.

**218. Work Programme 2020/21**  
*(Item 14)*

(1) RESOLVED that the Work Programme for 2020/21 be noted

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