

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel
To: Governance and Audit Committee, 15 November 2022
Subject: Lessons Learned Update
Status: Unrestricted

Recommendation

The Governance and Audit Committee is asked to:

- a) **NOTE** the update on management action taken and planned in relation to the Review Report; and
- b) **AGREE** the regularity of future updates to be brought before the Committee

1. Introduction

- a) At the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee on 29th September 2022, Members received and discussed the SEND Transport Lessons Learned Review report.
- b) After discussion between the General Counsel, the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education and the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport, this report brings a summary table of a range of management actions and activity that are being undertaken by officers in the areas where the report author recommended that lessons be learned.
- c) The summary table is attached at Appendix 1 and Members will note that this includes operational activity and governance matters. Members will also be aware that in addition to the work occasioned by the report that officers had also been working on activity on an ongoing basis and this work is also referenced in places.

2. The Purpose of the Management Action Table

- a) Over the course of the past nine months, officers have apologised in a number of meetings to the families that were affected by the significant service failures in February 2022 and those are repeated.
- b) Staff across the Council are rightly keen to emphasise that they are motivated on a daily basis to support the families of Kent and they are acutely aware that every action and task they complete relates to a child and the education they

receive. As the report recognises, failures did not occur as a result of a lack of caring or an absence of hard work.

- c) The purpose of the Management Action Table is to provide Members of Governance and Audit Committee with an overview of the activity being undertaken to address a number of areas where governance procedures and cross-directorate responsibilities have slowly deviated from expected practice over a number of years. It is also intended to pull together existing and planned activity and keep Members updated on progress on the management activity to address
- d) Ultimately, these actions are being taken by management in the context of the Council's current operating and financial position. Having undertaken the review and developed a management response, the intention of officers is to place activity and resources into the delivery of those priority actions.
- e) As such, the table demonstrates how the work will be taken forward and outcome reports will be brought back to this Committee as the work detailed in the table is delivered.
- f) It is intended that the Management Action Table is an iterative rather than static piece of work. This is because of the dynamic nature of the services being provided and the needs being met in the context of the resources provided, market conditions and government policy. In short, we will need to continue to adapt.
- g) Finally, Members will note that the Management Action Table includes activity that reaches across the broader Council and isn't limited to the immediate areas subject of the review. It is felt important to ensure that learning is shared and implemented across all services.

3. The Role of Governance and Audit

- a) From a management perspective, it is important that discussion and oversight from Governance and Audit now shifts to the delivery of the actions identified in the table and it is a matter for Members as to how regularly they wish to see the updated table brought back for assurance.
- b) Separately, Members will see activity reflected in the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement which will be presented to the January meeting and forthcoming papers around governance to the County Council in December and this will provide a further opportunity for Members to cross-check and assure themselves that actions are being taken forward.
- c) Future activity will be within the terms of reference for this Committee and the reviewing for assurance of the discharge of activity of the Management Action Table falls squarely within that remit.

4. Looking Forward

- a) Any lessons learned report naturally includes a focus on the future improvements that can be made and the Management Action Table sets out how those improvements will be delivered. It is important to reflect that whilst officers are committed to resolving things as quickly as possible within available resources, these are not all actions that can or should be delivered within weeks.
- b) The relevant Corporate Management Team members (General Counsel, Corporate Director CYPE and Corporate Director GET) are positive about the opportunities for improvement. Both they and their management teams are confident about quick improvements that can be made alongside systemic changes to ensure similar issues cannot occur again.
- c) While efforts will continue to ensure that the findings of this report will be implemented, it is hoped that Kent families can take comfort that fundamental reform is already underway, which can be evidenced by the recent work undertaken to support pupils transferring to new schools in September 2022.
- d) While this vital work did not yet have the benefit of the findings of the report, officers within CYPE and GET worked in conjunction with Kent PACT to redesign assessment and implementation processes to better serve pupils with SEN, a point reflected upon by PACT in this Committee's last meeting.
- e) As a result, over 98% of all on time Secondary Transfer applications for free school transport were successfully implemented before the start of the new school year. Further development and strengthening is now possible as Officers work collaboratively to implement the further findings of this report. Officers will continue to improve services in aspiration of 100% success rates.
- f) It is important to also build on where existing and planned improvement work is going well and reflect that in future plans. The above context is important in that regard.

5. Recommendations

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6. Report Author and Relevant Director

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