

## 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 Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 27th February, 2025.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr D Beaney, Mr P Bartlett (Substitute for Mr A Sandhu, MBE), Sir Paul Carter, CBE (Substitute for Mrs M McArthur), Ms M Dawkins, Ms S Hamilton, Ms J Hawkins, Ms J Meade, Mr C Passmore (Substitute for Mrs T Dean, MBE), Mr P Stepto and Mr Q Roper

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R Love, OBE (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) and Mrs S Chandler (Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services)

IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Hammond (Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education), Craig Chapman (Head of Fair Access), Christy Holden (Head of Children's Commissioning), James Clapson (Democratic Services Officer), Katherine Atkinson (Assistant Director, Management Information and Intelligence, Integrated Children's Services), Helen Cook (Senior Commissioner), Alice Gleave (Interim Assistant Director for SEND Operations), Emma Hanson (Senior Commissioning Manager), Georgia Humphreys (Democratic Services Officer), Kevin Kasaven (Director of Children's Countywide Services), Christine McInnes (Director of Education), Mark Scrivener (Head of Risk and Delivery Assurance), Sarah Chapman (Children & Young People's Occupational Therapy service Manager), Robert Veale (Assistant Director Education (East Kent)), Jude Farrell (Head of Service), Michelle Stanley (Education Lead Adviser), Karen Stone (Revenue Finance Manager (0 - 25 services)), David Adams (Assistant Director Education (South Kent)) and Nick Abrahams (Area Education Officer – West Kent)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **20. Apologies and Substitutes** *(Item 2)*

Apologies had been received from Mr Cooke, Mr Reidy, Mrs Game, Mr Manion, Mrs McArthur for whom Sir Paul Carter was present as substitute, Mr Sandhu for whom Mr Bartlett was present as substitute, and Mrs Dean for whom Mr Passmore was present as a substitute.

#### **21. Declarations of Interest** *(Item 3)*

1. Mr Passmore declared that his wife was a full time private educational psychologist working with Kent residents and the full range of private and public educational establishments in Kent.

2. Sir Paul Carter declared that he was a Director of the Lee Academy Trust.

## **22. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2025**

*(Item 4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2025 were a correct record.

## **23. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members**

*(Item 5)*

1. Mrs Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, gave a verbal update on the following:
  - a. The Kent Practice Framework had been given Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP) executive approval. The multiagency agreement was a key development for the design phase of reforming children's services. The framework offered the opportunity for families to receive consistent practice from across the multi-agency.
  - b. The LADO and Education Safeguarding Advisory Service (LESAS) absorbed the Sector Led Improvement Programme (SLIP). This provided an opportunity for KCC to work closely alongside the Department of Education and other Local Authorities to help design the future of children's services.
  - c. Kent Youth County Council took part in the launch of 'Don't Disrespect', which was a partnership campaign between Kent County Council, Kent Police and the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit to combat street harassment and violence towards women and girls. Mrs Chandler shared that the 'Don't Disrespect' film and campaign including posters and social media campaigns were available at: [www.dontdisrespect.uk](http://www.dontdisrespect.uk).
  - d. Virtual School Kent had received further accreditation for the Nurture Programme. Tony Doran, the Headteacher of Virtual School Kent had been asked to be part of an All Party Parliamentary Group on Inclusion and Relational Approaches in Education.
  - e. Mrs Chandler attended the CYPE Conference Day which focused on neurodiversity. The conference provided insight on the latest research from the Children's Commissioner, the work of NELFT, the neuroscience of learning and the biology of stress, and the Dynamic Support Service.
  - f. Safer Internet Day 2025 took place on 11th February 2025, the theme was "Too good to be true? Protecting yourself and others from scams online".
2. Mr Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, gave a verbal update on the following:
  - a. This year's SEN Phase Transfer had completed 97.5% of decisions within the published timeline, 91% of families had received a named

preference. Mr Love shared his pride in and expressed congratulations for the teams achievement, whilst recognising that there was more work to be done.

- b. Mr Love had conducted four school visits in February, three of which being special schools. KCC were supporting two of the schools visited to expand, to ensure that sufficient special school places were available for those children with the most complex needs.

RESOLVED that the updates were noted.

## **24. Performance Monitoring** *(Item 6)*

1. Ms Atkinson, introduced the report and highlighted key aspects throughout, explaining that further information had been added to scorecard such as the rates of permanent exclusions and severe/persistent absences.
2. Mr Love highlighted the KPI for the number of EHCP's issued within 20 weeks, emphasising the importance of ensuring improvements within this process were long term and sustainable. Additionally, noting that there has been significant improvements in progress, Mr Love was confident that for February, Kent would be within the top quartile of performers in England.
3. In response to comments and questions it was said:
  - a. Ms Atkinson shared that the backlog of cases had decreased and the timelines of EHCP's was under control. The idea of quarterly targets had been raised to have a continuous improvement approach. Regarding the take-up of early free education places, Ms Atkinson explained that it was seasonal, there were significant changes within the early years sector that was affecting take-up rates. Further indicators for early years were going to be explored to provide more information. Mr Love added in October 2023 the oldest EHCP case was 124 weeks old, compared to updated figures where the oldest case was around 20 weeks old. The service was significantly improving, there was an aim to chase targets but not compromise quality.
  - b. Mr Chapman shared that the volume of available Educational Psychologists was limited, there was an intention to make better use of staff time rather than increasing the numbers, additionally Educational Psychologists were aiming to increase their availability.
  - c. In order to tackle persistent absences in schools a multi-disciplinary approach was required, there had been more challenges in schools since the COVID-19 Pandemic. There was research going into emotional based school avoidance, how to support schools with this and ensure front line staff understanding. There was going to be a session with Assistant Directors about absence, and how to make sure all those involved had a full understanding of the causes, the way to

address it and the support that could be offered. Last year training was developed for front line staff, there was a desire to refresh and expand this. Ms Chandler added that school avoidance was a key issue for early help teams and that there was work being done to tackle this issue. Ms Hammond added that there was an annual meeting with two South East local authority colleagues for peer review, the topic for the upcoming meeting was long term school absences.

- d. A Member noted the importance of clear thresholds and criteria for the balance of mainstream inclusion and special school places, explaining that national Government and the Tribunal System needed to define these. Mr Love agreed that there was a need for further collaboration with the Government to refine and strengthen guidance. Additionally, the Tribunal Service needed to consider the broader responsibilities of Local Authorities in resource allocation. The thresholds for EHCP's used by KCC were those outlined in the SEND Code of Practice. Mr Love was to continue his dialog with Head Teacher's and Principal's around this topic. Ms McInnes added that guidance was needed, Officers had been supporting school leaders in Kent to develop that guidance and descriptors, the document was in its final stages. There was a working group of special school Head Teachers who were developing the criteria for the different types of special needs, to help identify which children were best placed in special schools, the document was to be published in May 2025.
- e. Ms McInnes recognised the issue of Educational Psychologists not receiving required information in a timely manner from schools. To combat this, termly Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) briefings had been established, there were separate briefings for early years, primary and secondary to address individual issues. These briefings had been running for 18 months, the benefits of the SENCO's work was being seen.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the update.

## **25. CYPE Contract Register- Overview of Commissioned Contracts** *(Item 7)*

- 1. Ms Holden introduced the report and gave an overview of the content.
- 2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
  - a. Ms McInnes shared that there was work being done to reduce the figures associated with the non-maintained and independent special school placements. This was being done through strengthening the commissioning system, there were visits to non-maintained and independent special schools being undertaken in order to check that young people were attending school and receiving the correct services. Additionally, issues were addressed through the special school review. Mrs Chandler explained that the Policy and Resources Cabinet

Committee covered procurement which provided a level of oversight. Mr Love added that the special school review was important to ensure that the right provision was in the right place. There were expansions taking place on schools and new schools were being opened with the aim of being able to have the option to send children and young people to maintained special schools.

- b. Ms Hammond explained that there would always be a need for independent special schools, whilst they could be specialised and targeted, they came at a significant cost.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report.

**26. Risk Management: Children, Young People and Education**  
*(Item 8)*

1. Mr Scrivener, introduced the report and gave an overview of the risks presented within the report.
2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
  - a. Mr Love explained that the safety valve was not the highest risk to KCC rather it was the historic overspending on the high needs spending block. There was a vast amount of work done to bring spending down in line with government allocation. It was believed that the safety valve was a part of the solution not the risk.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered the risks presented.

**27. 25/00022 Admission Arrangements and Scheme for 2026-27 Academic Year**  
*(Item 9)*

1. Mr Chapman introduced the annual report and gave an overview of its content.
2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
  - a. Mr Chapman shared that proposed developments were considered in areas where reductions were agreed. An advantage of the arrangement of the admissions process was that if there was an unexpected influx of children, schools were able to offer places above their PAN. Mr Love added that future developments were taken into consideration in the Annual Kent Commissioning Plan, which was a five year rolling programme that had a significant amount of background intelligence, with the opportunity to adjust if needed.
  - b. When asked if schools would be provided with additional assistance as school boundaries changed. Mr Chapman explained that this issue would not be directly addressed through the admission process, however it was confirmed that there would be adjustments to funding relative to need.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and endorsed the decision of the determined admission arrangements.

**28. 25/00032 Therapies – Recommissioning of SEN Therapy provision to enable access to the Education Curriculum**

*(Item 10)*

1. Ms Holden, introduced the report and gave an overview of its content.
2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
  - a. Ms Holden explained that according to the SEND Code of Practice the Local Authority had to cover the costs of any failures in NHS commissioning. The contract represented 20% of the total therapy provision across the county, which covered KCC's statutory delivery for therapy for children who needed it in order to access the education curriculum. Additionally, within the new contract, the service delivery model was to be changed to drive efficiency, the NHS invested in the Balance System model in 2020, the providers had been adapting their model which increased the efficiency of the system.
  - b. The NHS invested £13 million into therapeutic services, whilst the Local Authority invested £2.2 million, there was intention to bring a proportion of that funding in-house for physiotherapy and occupational therapy delivery, £1.8 million would be reprocured for speech, language and communication needs.
  - c. Due to the contracts being legacy NHS provider contracts, the Local Authority did not have oversight of the KPI's on the provider contracts, this was to change to ensure the Local Authority had further oversight and decision making powers in the KPI's.
  - d. Ms Holden was to come back to the Committee with specific funding details.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and endorsed the proposed decision.

**29. 25/00020 Community Learning and Skills (CLS) - Sub-contracting Education and Skills Funding Agency provision for 16 to 19 year olds**

*(Item 11)*

1. Ms Holden, introduced the report explaining that the team were waiting for confirmation of funding.
2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
  - a. Ms Farrell confirmed that the providers of delivery for services could be managed as appropriate, there was work done with the Education Directorate to track needs within districts in Kent. This sub-contracting provision would allow the service to offer opportunities as they arose within Kent.

- b. Members noted the importance of young people's awareness of the bursaries available. Ms Farrell was to ensure that offers of these bursaries were clear to young people.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and endorsed the proposed decision.

**30. 25/00021 Community Learning and Skills (CLS) - Sub-contracting Education and Skills Funding Agency provision for 19 to 25 year olds**  
(Item 12)

1. Ms Holden, introduced the report and gave an overview of its content.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and endorsed the proposed decision.

**31. 25/00023 Raising Ambition. Enabling Curiosity. Building Resilience. A Strategy for the Future of Education in Kent, 2025-2030**  
(Item 13)

1. Mr Love, introduced the report and gave an overview of its content. Ms Stanley shared that the documents shared with Members were to be revised before publication.
2. Ms McInnes, added that around 50% of schools in Kent were academies, there was a desire for schools to have a shared focus on the best outcomes for children, young people and families within local areas. Additionally, government funding for the Local Authorities duty of school improvement for maintained schools had ceased and was to be funded from core funding.
3. In response to comments and question it was said:
  - a. Mr Love explained that this strategy allowed the opportunity for Kent's opinion on the role of education to be clear. Additionally, it provided the opportunity to produce changes, the strategy was to continue to evolve and refine, it was to be used as a tool for future conversations and strategies.
  - b. It was difficult to measure the resilience of the strategy in terms of local government reorganisation as the exact details had not yet been provided by the Government. Mr Love emphasised the importance of having clarity on the correct strategy for Kent instead of waiting to find out what was going to happen next.
  - c. Mr Love explained that the strategy would support Kent's Grammar Schools.
  - d. Mrs Chandler shared the importance of looking at the early years section of this strategy, emphasising the importance to early intervention.
  - e. Ms Stanley added that there was an action plan that would be evaluated against progress, feedback, qualitative feedback from the sector, children and young people and the established data sets. There were sections on implementation, SEND and the environment within this.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and endorsed the proposed decision.

**32. 25/00010 Proposed Revision of Rates Payable and Charges Levied by Kent County Council for Children's Social Care Services in 2025-26**  
(Item 14)

1. Ms Stone, introduced the annual report and gave an overview of its content.
2. Ms Hammond requested that the link to initial foster care enquiry website be included in the minutes. Which could be accessed here: [Fostering Enquiry](#)

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and endorsed the proposals.

**33. 25/00009 Proposal to change the age range of Blean Primary School, Canterbury, from 4-11 years to 3-11 years**  
(Item 15)

1. Mr Veale introduced the paper and gave an overview of its content.
2. When asked how issues with parking would be dealt with, Mr Veale shared that parking had been provided by the University of Kent. Additionally, explaining that the school needed to develop its own travel plan. Mr Veale was not able to comment on any proposed developments.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and endorsed the proposed decision.

**34. SACRE Annual Report 2023/24**  
(Item 17)

1. The Committee were advised that the Chairman of the SACRE Committee endorsed the report.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report.

**35. Work Programme**  
(Item 18)

RESOLVED that the work programme was noted.

**Motion to Exclude the Press and Public**

RESOLVED that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.