

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 Online on Tuesday, 9th March, 2021.

PRESENT: Mrs L Game (Chairman), Mrs A D Allen, MBE, Mr M J Angell, Mr D L Brazier, Mrs P T Cole, Mr G Cooke, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Ms S Hamilton, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr S C Manion and Dr L Sullivan

Co-optees: Mr M Reidy

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

235. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Brazier, Mrs Linfield and Mr Murphy.

236. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda
(Item 3)

Dr Sullivan declared an interest as her husband worked as an Early Help Worker for Kent County Council.

237. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2021
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held on 15 January 2021 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

238. 20/00102 - Community Support Services for Disabled Children & Young People
(Item 5)

Christy Holden (Head of Strategic Commissioning – Children's) and Mark Walker (Director of SEND) were in attendance for this item.

- 1) Ms Holden introduced the report regarding community support services for disabled children and young people.
- 2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:
 - Statutory services were provided for people who needed care or support at home and there would be no change in service provision. Around 80% of service providers were shared between Children's and Adults' Services and the changes would be around the procurement and contract processes.

- If families felt that support was not meeting their needs, they were able to ask for a review from a social worker and support packages were reviewed on a regular basis.
- Services were provided up to the age of 25, supporting service users with the transition into adulthood.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

239. 21/00012 - Post 16 Transport Policy 2021-22
(Item 6)

Craig Chapman (Interim Head of Fair Access) and David Adams (Interim Director for Education) were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Chapman introduced the report and it was noted that as the public consultation on the Post 16 Transport Policy 2021-22 had not been concluded at the time of the agenda publication, additional responses had been received and these would be circulated to Members.

2) In response to questions, it was noted:

- Regarding the operational process of 16 Plus Travel Saver Card or free school transport, evidence for fair access was provided from multiple sources and there was a flexible approach.
- It was best practice that extenuating circumstances be taken into account when applying the policy. Where all other options had been exhausted, additional support could be provided where a travel pass would not be suitable to meet the needs of post-16 child, in the same way as transport would be provided for a pre-16 child.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

240. 21/00018 - Proposed Revision of Rates Payable and Charges Levied by Kent County Council for Children's Social Care Services in 2021-22
(Item 7)

Karen Stone (Revenue Finance Manager) and Sarah Hammond (Director Integrated Children's Services) were in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Stone introduced the report and it was noted that KCC's maintenance rate for foster carers is based on the Department for Education's published rate and at the time of agenda publication, it had not been published. Members were advised that there was no update from Department of Education.

2) Members acknowledged the valued and important work of foster carers. It was noted that the rate increase for 2021-22 was in line with the proposed increase for KCC staff pay award.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

241. 21/00019 - SEND Strategy 2021-2024
(Item 8)

Mark Walker (Interim Director of SEND) and Matt Dunkley (Corporate Director for CYPE) were in attendance for this item.

1) Mrs Chandler introduced the report and said that the strategy and consultation responses had been illustrative of the huge amount of work and progress that had been made on the Written Statement of Action. In particular, the consultation responses from parents and carers had demonstrated the progress that had been made in co-production and communication.

2) In response to questions, it was noted:

- It was requested that there be a yearly report of spending in relation to the strategy.
- It had been acknowledged that changes since 2014 had made the system unsustainable on a national level, with higher numbers of children being identified as requiring additional support. The system had encouraged high levels of expenditure and during this period, many parents were raising concerns about mainstream schools not being able to meet the needs of their children. This issue was creating funding deficits for local authorities across the country. There would need to be a settlement for high needs funding deficit as it would not be possible to pay off the deficit and stay within the prescribed funding formula.
- Schools would need to feel equipped and become confident in meeting a higher proportion of children's needs. The effect of this change would be that parents would feel that their children's needs were met without an ECHP or without seeking a diagnosis. There would be a change from the use of medicalised model to a social model of meeting children's needs.
- It was envisaged that the backlog of ECHP assessments would be cleared in around 2 months.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

242. 21/00023 - Extension of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) Service Level Agreement (SLA)
(Item 9)

Christy Holden Christy Holden (Head of Strategic Commissioning – Children's) and Sholeh Soleimanifar (Commissioner) were in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Holden introduced the report regarding the extension of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) Service Level Agreement (SLA).

2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- A minor change was proposed to the KPIs to inform the review of the services over the next 12 months and professional stakeholders were in agreement. The KPIs were too broad and the new KPIs were being developed with schools and other settings to make them more meaningful and pertinent.

- It was proposed that that an update be provided to the Cabinet Committee.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

243. Risk Management: Children, Young People and Education

(Item 10)

Jody Catterall (Risk Manager, Mark Walker (Director - SEND) and Matt Dunkley (Corporate Director – CYPE) were in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Catterall introduced the report and it was noted that the report gave an overall view of key strategic risks and probability of risks.

2) In response to questions, it was noted:

- It was anticipated that numbers of referrals for Children’s Social Services would increase during the year. There had been a drop in families being referred due to the impact of pandemic, as children had not been seen by schools, health visitors and GPs.
- There had been a move away from sending documents via open access programmes and in the post due to risks around data security. Digital encrypted documents and virtual meetings had helped to protect confidential information.
- There were formal quarterly updates to the risk register but work was done with directorate management teams to review in between quarterly updates.
- It was requested that officers presenting reports to the Cabinet Committee link to the risk register.
- The redirection of services, where preventative services staff had been redeployed to work in tier 3 and 4 services would be reviewed.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

244. SACRE Report

(Item 11)

1) Mr Manion (Chairman of SACRE) introduced the report. He expressed his to officers for their involvement in supporting SACRE meetings and thanked Members for their participation.

2) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

School Expansions

245. 21/00016 - Proposed temporary expansion of Mascalls Academy

(Item 12)

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

- 1) Mr Abrahams introduced the report.
- 2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:
 - The extension was temporary due to the forecast anticipating that the intake for September 2022 and September 2023 would be larger. These were anticipated to be 'bulge' years. It was not expected that the temporary expansion would require transport mitigations.
- 3) RESOLVED to note the report.

246. 21/00015 - Lunsford and Birchington School Roofs
(Item 13)

Nick Abrahams (Area Education Officer - West Kent) and Marisa White (Area Education Officer – East Kent) were in attendance for this item.

- 1) Mr Abrahams introduced the report.
- 2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:
 - Lunsford School was a small school with one building and would need to be vacated during the repairs. A modular provision with fencing was being put in place.
 - Birchington School would need to be partially vacated and the school was involved with plans for temporary accommodation being put into place on the school fields.
- 3) RESOLVED to note the report.

247. 21/00014 - Chilmington Green Secondary School Provision
(Item 14)

RESOLVED to note the report.

248. 21/00020 - The Towers School - addition of year 7 places
(Item 15)

RESOLVED to note the report.

249. 21/00017- Proposal to establish a 16 place Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) for ASD at Garlinge Primary School & Nursery from September 2021
(Item 16)

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

- 1) Ms White introduced the report and advised that there had been a delay due to feasibility work to find the best option for the accommodation on site.
- 2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- The school was happy with the accommodation for the Specialist Resourced Provision for ASD.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

250. 21/00025 - Proposed Expansion of Invicta Grammar School, Huntsman Lane, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 5DS
(Item 18)

RESOLVED to note the report.

251. Complaints Annual Report 2019-20
(Item 19)

Claire Thomson (Complaints Officer) was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Thomson introduced the report.

2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- Themes arising from complaints received were linked into practice development for Integrated Children's Services.
- SEN complaint findings were reviewed and taken forward as part of the improvement plan.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

252. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Public Report
(Item 20)

Claire Thomson (Complaints Officer), Sarah Hammond (Director – Integrated Children's Services) and Matt Dunkley (Corporate Director - CYPE) were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Dunkley introduced the report.

2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- KCC would usually accept findings and recommendations from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. It was noted that KCC had disagreed with findings in relation to a complaint made by a parent.
- KCC had disagreed with the Ombudsman's interpretation of the 1989 Children's Act. The first strategy meeting should have taken place in the London borough where the incident was alleged to have happened. However, the LGO had found that KCC should have held the first strategy meeting following being informed of the allegations.
- There had also been disagreement regarding what services should have been provided to the child by request of the parent.
- KCC was liaising with the LGO regarding 'cross-border' cases and the parameters of an audit requested by the LGO.

- Further action was being taken from the Department for Education to clarify practice for local authorities.
- The LGO had also criticised KCC's use of the statutory complaint process. Assessments were undertaken on all new complaints received to ensure the most appropriate complaints procedure was used, on this occasion the Ombudsman disagreed with the decision taken.
- The complaint had highlighted a delay in following up movement of information to a London borough and a process had been put in place moving forward.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

253. Performance Scorecard

(Item 21)

Katherine Atkinson (Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence) was in attendance for this item.

- 1) Ms Atkinson introduced the Performance Monitoring scorecard and reported that indicators relating to Integrated Children's Services had all remained green and amber, which showed that performance had not declined due to the pandemic.
- 2) Performance relating to Early Help Assessments had improved from the previous year and was RAG-rated green.
- 3) There had continued to be challenges around the issuing of Education, Care and Health Plans due to an unprecedented increase in demand. However, additional resource had been put in and work had continued clearing the backlog of assessments.
- 4) The target percentage of 100% of children and young people being offered a home visit within 10 school days of the Local Authority being informed of them being electively home educated had not been met but performance was at 93%.
- 5) Some indicators were 'greyed out' on the report because the data was not available due to the impact of the pandemic.
- 6) In response to questions and comments from Members, it was noted:
 - Schools have digital reporting routes for informing KCC when a child has gone 'off-roll', is missing education or has become electively home educated. The information is shared with the relevant team(s) in KCC and followed up, as appropriate.
 - Concerns were raised about numbers of new entrants into the youth justice system. An increase in young people in custody had related to a single serious incident and therefore, did not constitute a trend across Kent.
 - Members of the public and specialist services such as Kent Police had continued to make referrals to Early Help and Children's Social

Services but there were less referrals from universal settings such as schools.

7) RESOLVED to note the report.

254. Education Endowment Foundation - Effective Kent Project
(Item 22)

Michelle Stanley (Education Lead Advisor) was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Stanley introduced the report.

2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- The offer from the project was very broad and the aim of the project was to encourage schools to use evidence when dealing with problems to make good decisions to support children.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

255. Verbal Update by Cabinet Member and Corporate Director
(Item 23)

1) Mr Long (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) said on 8 March 2021, schools and colleges re-opened to all pupils with asymptomatic Covid-19 testing in place. Students in secondary school settings were to take three Covid-19 tests as they returned to the classroom at existing school testing facilities and following the initial programme of three tests in school which was carried out by the student but supervised by an adult, students were to be provided with two rapid tests to use each week at home. Staff in secondary schools were also to be supplied with test kits to self-swab and test themselves twice a week at home. The latest stance from Public Health England was that whilst it was preferable for students to have both the throat and nasal swabbing, one form of testing was better than none and this could only be carried out with parental consent. Thanks were given to schools that had fully opened and thanks were given to the community testing centres who had helped to speed up the return of students into classroom settings.

The Government had announced that GCSE, AS and A Level exams would not be going ahead as planned in the summer. Students were to instead receive grades determined by teachers, with pupils only assessed on what they had been taught and not what they may have missed. This would help to ensure that students could progress to the next stage of their education or careers and not be disadvantaged by the disruption of last year. Whilst there was much work yet to be done to mitigate increased teacher workloads, an influx of appeals and grade inflation, KCC supported the stance taken by government to avoid a repeat of the issues faced last year whereby students' grades were calculated by the Ofqual algorithm. The news was welcomed and it was felt it provided sufficient time to get processes in place ahead of the exam season.

National Offer day was on 1 March. A total of 22,264 parents/ carers (18,273 from Kent) applied for a place for their child in a Kent school for September 2021, which was an additional 594 applications when compared to 2020. Despite this, 95.38% of Kent families (17,428) were offered a place at one of the schools they selected.

As parents/carers selected their six schools before knowing their child's Kent Test results, many named first preferences their child did not end up being eligible for and therefore it was expected that the number of pupils offered a place at their first preference school – 12,736 pupils (69.7% of the Kent cohort) – would be significantly lower than last year's 77.65%. However, a total of 2,577 children (14.1% of the Kent cohort) were to be offered a place at the school they put as their second preference, up from 11.68% last year.

- Parents/carers had until Monday, 15 March 2021 to accept or refuse their offer and return waiting list forms.
- Parents/carers had to lodge any appeals for their named schools by Friday, 26 March in order for them to be heard on time.
- KCC was to reallocate places from schools' waiting lists sending out a second round of offers on Wednesday, 21 April.
- After Wednesday, 21 April, schools were to maintain their own waiting lists and parents/carers can apply to schools direct to ask to be placed on the waiting list.

KCC staff members were ready to speak to parents and carers to answer any questions as well as offer information, advice and support.

Thanks were given to teachers and support staff for going above and beyond to continue to educate and support Kent's children and young people in extremely challenging circumstances. Praise was also given to pupils who embraced remote learning and parents and carers who had supported their sons and daughters with home-schooling, many while working from home themselves.

In line with the work that was being done around the Reconnect Programme, the government had also announced that there would be a £700m funding package allocated to schools to put on classes and wellbeing sessions during the summer holidays. Mr Long said he very much looked forward to the prospect of working with schools to review ways in which this money could be best utilised to develop the universal offer to children and young people across Kent as part of the Reconnect programme and reporting back to Members on its progress.

In response to questions, it was noted:

- With few exceptions, most schools in Kent accepted the Kent Test for admissions for selective education and children only had to sit one test.
- The Department for Education had not indicated what would happen in 2022.

2) Mrs Chandler (Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services) said she was honoured to be a part of the Spirit of Try Angle Awards ceremony which was to take place virtually on 12 March. The Try Angle Awards, which were in their 26th year, recognised and rewarded the outstanding efforts and achievements of young people and groups who tried their best whether at school, work, college, in business or in their wider community across Kent, often with little recognition and in difficult circumstances. The awards would go to those who had been nominated under the eight categories, including: Art, Music, Sport, community action, courage, personal development, positive intervention and good friends and young carers. This year had been exceptionally difficult for children and young people who had faced additional challenges since the outbreak of Covid-19, Mrs Chandler was to be present at the award ceremony, on behalf of KCC which recognises and applauds their perseverance, excellence, and exceptional achievements.

At Budget County Council, it was mentioned that a comprehensive programme was being developed which addressed the broad range of measures that KCC were putting in place to help all children and young people in Kent recover from the effects of the Covid pandemic. The programme had been developed in recognition that every child and young person had lost something as a result of the pandemic and KCC were working with schools, colleges and settings to ensure that all our children and young people were a priority over the next 12 to 18 months moving forward and out of lockdown. The broad aim of the Reconnect Programme was to help all Kent Children and Young People Reconnect to, Health and happiness, economic wellbeing, sports activities and the outdoors, missed learning, family, friends and community. The programme was likely to be organised under these workstreams and would pull on a broad community base, businesses and partner buy-ins across Kent to help develop a fantastic range of activities. An outline report of the proposals was to be presented to Cabinet on 15 March and Members would be updated as this work progressed.

Between 20 November and 18 December 2020, local authorities were invited to submit applications for funding to support them with costs incurred as a result of caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are now care leavers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Submissions had been assessed and on 26 February KCC received confirmation from the Department for Education that it had been successful in securing £794,333 from the governments Covid-19 fund.

With regard to UAS numbers, there had been a slow and steady rise in new arrivals since the start of the new year. There had also been a trickle of transfers out of Kent and work was continuing with the Home Office to try to ensure that any potential upsurge in UASC arrivals did not result in KCC being unable to safely accept them again. In addition, in accordance with our commitment to the Council, Oakwood House had been vacated and had been returned to the Council's use.

The Annual Report of the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership was pending imminent publication.

3) Mr Dunkley (Corporate Director – Children, Young People and Education) said thank you to all staff in CYPE and in schools for their response to the pandemic and continued efforts.

A one year funding settlement from central government was imminent and there would be a new comprehensive spending review, which would be an interesting budget challenge. The budget for 2022-23 was anticipated to be predicated on the CSR settlement. There were major reviews in all areas of work including all social care services and special educational needs.

In response to a question regarding funding of the Re-Connect programme, work was being done to amalgamate the additional funding relating to Covid-19, contributions were being sought from partners and to look at what underspends could be used towards the activities.

256. Work Programme
(Item 24)

RESOLVED that the Work Programme for 2020/21 be noted.

257. Dates 2021-22
(Item 25)

Members agreed to note the proposed meeting dates for 2021-22.