

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 Tuesday, 16th May, 2023.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr A Brady, Ms S Hamilton, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr S C Manion, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr P Stepto, Dr L Sullivan and Mr M Reidy.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mrs Bruneau, Mr Cooke, Mrs McArthur, Dr Canon Roper and Mrs Dean, for whom Mr Streatfield was present.

Mr Beaney was present virtually.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

Mr Streatfield declared an interest in item 8 - 23/00051 Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2023/24.

Mrs Hamilton declared an interest in agenda item 13 - 23/00035 Care Leavers Covenant.

Mr Jeffrey declared an interest in item 7 – Ofsted Update, and item 13 - 23/00035 Care Leavers Covenant.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023
(Item 4)

1) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 5)

1) Mr Love provided his Cabinet Member Verbal Update as follows:

Primary School Offers.

Mr Love said that Monday 17 April was primary school offer day for children across Kent. This year there were just under 17,000 applications, and just over 90% of pupils were offered their first preference. Around 1.5% of pupils were unable to be offered a place at any of their named preferred schools, this was an improvement from 2.25% last year.

Parents were given until Monday 1 May to accept or refuse the offer given, and the appeal deadline was 16 May.

KCC would reallocate places from schools' waiting lists and send out a second round of offers on Wednesday 7 June. From Thursday 8 June, schools would maintain their own waiting lists; parents could apply to schools directly after this date to ask to be placed on the waiting list.

Thanks and congratulations were offered to the KCC admissions team for their success in offering the vast majority of Kent's children a place at their preferred school.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Update.

Mr Love advised that staffing numbers within the SEND service had been an issue for some time however, recruitment had been going well, and staff numbers were increasing; vacancies within the case holding team had dropped from over 100 to around 50. The recruitment strategy had also been refreshed to widen the potential pool of applicants, which should help to continue the reduction in vacancies.

The SEND Enquiries Hub was up and running, it provided parents and carers with a dedicated point of contact for enquiries about SEND support, assessments, placements and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). The Hub could also put families in touch with the right caseworker when needed.

The SEND Enquiry Hub was part of a package of measures being put in place to ensure better outcomes for those using SEND services in Kent, that was taking place alongside a wider restructure and recruitment drive. Further details about the SEND Enquiry Hub were available on the website:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs>.

The draft of the Kent Areas Accelerated Progress Plan has been submitted to the Department for Education (DfE). This was the start of a process that would lead to the plan being agreed and published by the DfE. KCC and its partners were working to address the SEND service performance shortfalls that were identified in September 2022, and there could be confidence that progress was being made.

Rosewood School Visit.

Mr Love spoke positively about his recent experience at the Boulanger Coffee Shop, a shop owned and operated by Rosewood School, that he visited with Director of Education Ms McInnes. They were very impressed with the school's ethos of, aim high and be kind. There was a culture of ambition for the children that was embedded throughout the school. Members were encouraged to search online to see how the school turned around the lives of the children it had contact with.

In answer to comments and questions from Members, Mr Love confirmed the following:

- The Kent Commissioning Plan fully summarised any capacity issues to a granular level for primary schools. Only around 1.5% of applicants did not receive a placement at one of their preferred schools, this would indicate that supply matched demand.
- KCC had a good working relationship with the Kent Parents and Carers Together organisation (Kent PACT) and valued its engagement.
- KCC aimed to rebuild the trust with parents that was identified as lacking in the November 2022 Ofsted revisit conclusions; this was being done directly and indirectly through collaborative working with organisations like Kent PACT.
- Mr Streatfeild would receive a written response outside of the meeting to his question asking how the current total number SEND Case Officer posts compared to the number before September 2022.

2) Mrs Chandler provided his Cabinet Member Verbal Update as follows:

Sensory Support Procurement.

Mrs Chandler advised that the Forthcoming Executive Decision for sensory support, that the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health was set to take in June, would introduce a framework of providers for adult and child sensory services over a period of four years, replacing the current spot purchased contracts.

It was anticipated this would improve the consistency of services by having clearly defined terms and contract specifications. Whilst the majority of the funding would come from the Adult Social Care and Health Budget, there would be a £120,000 contribution across the four years from CYPE.

This would be an important decision that tied in with Kent's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, particularly the principle that young people with SEND and their families 'benefit from working with skilled practitioners who understand their needs and how these can be best met'.

Social Work Degree Apprenticeships.

Congratulations were offered to the Social Work Degree Apprenticeship cohort who recently passed their degrees. This was a fantastic achievement and highlighted the dedication of not only those who undertook the apprenticeship, but also those who supported them on their journey into social work including the practice educators, the teams within which they were based.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and Ofsted Inspection.

Last week Kent had a joint HMIP and Ofsted Inspection which focused on the theme of young people's experiences of remand. It was clear from the feedback last week that youth justice services had improved since the HMIP inspection of 2021, with glowing feedback about collaboration between youth justice and social work services.

The Ofsted inspector was of the view that social work practice had improved further since the inspection in May 2022, stating that she observed, through this

inspection, some of the best practice seen in her long career as an inspector. Thanks were offered to all the staff for their continued hard work. The visit was part of a thematic investigation and therefore would not result in a judgement however, a full report on all visits would be published as a thematic report at the end of the Summer.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Update.

As of 12 May, there had been 40 UASC arrivals since the start of the month, bringing the total number of UASC arrivals for 2023 to 444. As the weather gets warmer, it was expected that there would be an increase in the number coming across the Channel, in line with previous years.

The largest cohort of UASC were from Afghanistan, followed by Eritrea and Syria.

Foster Care Fortnight.

Mrs Chandler advised that 15 May was the start of Foster Care Fortnight, which highlights the importance of children being fostered by a family in their local community.

There was a shortage of foster carers across the United Kingdom, Kent Fostering was desperately seeking more households to join its fostering community across the county. The call for carers went to all communities, regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age or marital status.

Thanks were offered to the district councils who included material promoting Kent's fostering services on their council tax statements. It was hoped that it encouraged more people to consider becoming a foster carer.

The next online information event would take place at 7pm on 17 May, and Mrs Chandler encouraged anyone with an interest in becoming a foster carer to attend. Details could be found on the Kent Fostering website:
(<https://www.kentfostering.co.uk/>)

5. Inclusion and Pupil Referral Units

(Item 8)

Stuart Collins, Director for Integrated Children's Services and Simon Smith, PIAS Manager were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Collins and Mr Smith outlined the report.

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

- The wait time for a pupil identified as eligible for the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was normally between a week and ten days.
- Schools that did not have a PRU in their area often had onsite arrangements available for pupils.

- Pupils were not returned to a mainstream school setting until they were ready. Children and families were supported through early help, social care, and interventions to help prepare them for their return to school.
- There were very few pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in the PRUs.
- Looking forward, there was a need for increased support for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) students in mainstream school settings.
- Since the pandemic there has been a change in behaviours that has led to a rise in suspensions and permanent exclusions. KCC would meet with SEMH and PRU Head Teachers to assess what could be done to further support pupils.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

6. Frontline Partner Authority and Early Adopter bid for Early Careers Framework (Item 9)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Hammond outlined the report.

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

- The total salary cost for the apprentice cohort over three years was £900,000. This would be paid by KCC as the Local Authority.
- The cost of agency social workers could be between £42 and £55 per hour. There was a memorandum between Kent local authorities not to employ any previously permanently employed social workers as agency staff, for at least six months following them leaving permanent employment in any local authority within the South-East region. Currently a Government consultation was looking at the regulation of agency staff and the retention of newly qualified social workers by local authorities.
- Some social workers have returned to the Council because of the additional support received through the Kent framework, and the culture of support from colleagues and managers.
- One measure of success would be if most of the apprentices continue to work in Kent once training was completed.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

7. Response to Social Care Review consultation (Item 10)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education was in attendance for this item.

1) Mrs Chandler introduced the report and noted that KCC's draft response was supportive of the majority of the proposals set out in the consultation. She added that the way early help and social work was integrated would make it well placed to undertake some of the indicative initiatives detailed in the consultation.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

8. 23/00051 Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2023/24
(Item 11)

Craig Chapman, Head of Fair Access and Christine McInnes, Director of Education and SEN were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Streatfeild declared an interest in this agenda item.

2) Mr Love introduced the item noting that a statement was required each year, and that it was planned that a Post 16 Transport Policy Statement report for 2024/25 would be considered by CYPE July 23, along with the 2024/25 policy for 4-16.

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

9. 23/00050 Services provided by The Education People
(Item 12)

David Adams, Area Education Officer (South Kent) and Christine McInnes, Director of Education and SEN were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Adams outlined the report.

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

- There was concern that this could be a reduction in service provision, however it was emphasised that this was part of a wider strategy for early years services, that looked to rationalise the service, avoid duplication, and provide best value for money.
- The contract with The Education People (TEP) was agreed in 2017/18, it was time to review and modernise the contract, and to include the provision of some services virtually.

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

10. 23/00046 Designated Key Worker Grant
(Item 13)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Emma Hanson, Senior Commissioning Manager were in attendance for this item.

1) Mrs Hamilton and Mr Jeffrey declared an interest in this item.

2) Mrs Chandler and Ms Holden introduced the report. Ms Holden advised that recommendation C, detailed in the report, required an amendment to remove the reference to a 'direct award contract', as it would not be required as part of the decision. The proposed record of decision would also be amended pending the formal decision.

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

- There were sufficient funds available to support the programme in its current form.
- All of the 18 to 25 year olds categorised as red or amber in Table 1 of the Keyworking Q3 Progress Report, would have a key worker by the end of the year.

4) RESOLVED to agree the recommendations as outlined in the report, subject to the amendment to recommendation C removing the reference to a 'direct award contract'.

11. 23/00039 Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education (CATIE)
(Item 14)

Siobhan Price, Education Officer Mainstream Inclusion, and Christine McInnes, Director of Education and SEN were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Love and Ms Price introduced the report.

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

- Priorities one and two, detailed at paragraph two of the report, would be funded by schools.
- The intention of the decision was to formalise practices that had been in place for the last two years. This strategy would feed into the larger education strategy.
- The system looked to improve practices within schools and make the best use of the expertise that was already in the place. Discussions with all stakeholders, including the families of children with SEND and the school staff who would be implementing the system, had guided the review.
- It was recognised that the system would not work for every child, other provisions would remain available for children who needed them.
- The strategy would be reviewed and any suggestions or comments from stakeholders would be considered when the strategy was updated.

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

12. 23/00036 School Term Dates 2024-25
(Item 15)

Christine McInnes, Director of Education and SEN were in attendance for this item.

1) Ms McInnes introduced the report.

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

- The proposed dates were in line with proposals across the country.
- Schools could contact KCC if they wished to discuss the setting of term dates.

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

13. 23/00035 Care Leavers Covenant
(Item 16)

Caroline Smith, Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education were in attendance for this item.

1) Mrs Chandler and Ms Smith introduced the report.

2) RESOLVED to agree the recommendation as outlined in the report.

14. Performance Monitoring
(Item 6)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, Wendy Murray, Performance and Information Manager and Maureen Robinson, MI Service Manager were in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Hammond introduced the report.

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

- The new SEND indicators included in the report allowed clearer monitoring of some of the key issues that impacted upon the SEND system.
- There were several potential indicators that could indicate successful prevention practices, for example the number of children identified as having SEN needs without an EHCP who experienced successful outcomes. The development of a method to assess the effectiveness of prevention practices was an area of ongoing work.

- 3) RESOLVED to note the report

15. Ofsted Update
(Item 7)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, Wendy Murray, Performance and Information Manager and Maureen Robinson, MI Service Manager were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Jeffrey declared an interest in this item.

2) Ms Hammond introduced the report.

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

- Inspections were very stressful for school staff, governors and children, the system should be changed to reduce this stress.

- The Ofsted one word summary played an important part of the inspection however, there was much more to an inspection than a single word.
- The inspection framework had been changed to include a safeguarding judgement, where safeguarding practices were judged to be lacking, this judgement could overshadow good work being done in other areas of the school.
- A school would be unable to achieve an outstanding Ofsted rating if it did not incorporate inclusive practices.

4) RESOLVED to note the report, and to consider at the next agenda setting meeting the inclusion of a summary document to give additional context to the data in the report.

16. 23/00056 Proposed expansion of Marden Primary Academy, Marden, Kent, TN12 9JX
(Item 18)

Nick Abrahams, Area Education Officer – West Kent was in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Abrahams introduced the report.

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

- It could be useful for Members to receive a list of upcoming proposed school changes; this would allow Members to know when a proposal was planned to be considered by CYPE in advance of the agenda publication.

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

17. 23/00055 Proposed change to age range of Laddingford St Mary's Church of England Primary School
(Item 19)

Nick Abrahams, Area Education Officer – West Kent was in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Abrahams introduced the report.

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

- The proposal would not create a new nursery school, it would enable the existing school to accept children from the age of three and above.

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

18. Work Programme
(Item 17)

RESOLVED to agree the work programme.