

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 20 April 2023.

PRESENT: Mr A Booth (Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King (Vice-Chairman), Mr N Baker, Mrs R Binks, Mr T Bond, Mr G Cooke, Rich Lehmann, Ms M McArthur, Mr H Rayner and Dr L Sullivan

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs S Chandler (Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services), Mr A Brady, Mr M A J Hood and Mr D Jeffrey

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Hammond (Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education), Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Mr S Collins (Director of Integrated Children's Services (West Kent and Early Help and Preventative Services Lead)), Ms H Birdi (Assistant Director of Adolescents and Open Access), Ms W Jeffreys (Consultant in Public Health), Ms A Noake (Senior Commissioner), Ms J Morley (Family Hubs Programme Manager), Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr M Dentten (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

83. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting *(Item A3)*

No declarations were made.

84. Decision 23/00015 - Family Hub Transformation Funding *(Item B1)*

1. The Chairman introduced the item and invited the proposer of the call-in, Mr Brady, to provide an overview of the reasons for his call-in. Mr Hood as the seconder was also invited to speak.
2. Mr Brady presented the reasons for his call-in. He explained that he had called the decision in on the grounds that its aims and outcomes had not been properly explained. He stated that Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee should have been provided with additional information, including comprehensive delivery plans, which would have allowed Members the opportunity to fully review the proposed decision and advise the Cabinet Member. He noted that Scrutiny Committee had been provided with additional information which the Cabinet Committee did not receive at their March meeting. It was further noted that the responsible officer had been sent a series of questions, which were only answered following the decision being taken, despite Cabinet Member assurance. He concluded by asserting that Members needed reassurance that the aims and outcomes of decision were a positive development and would provide the best option for children and families in Kent. Mr Hood added that the outcomes of the decision were not

clearly presented, noting that the report acknowledged that KCC was still exploring how it could deliver the programme. He stated that it was important for the extent of face-to-face service delivery to be defined, including the related estate requirement. He asked how many other councils were in the same position and for assurance that the Cabinet Committee would be given the opportunity to monitor decision implementation.

3. The Chairman invited Mrs Chandler to respond. Mrs Chandler addressed the information presented to Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee, explaining that due to deadlines set by the Department for Education (DfE) and ongoing criteria development, further information was now available, which had not been at the time of the Cabinet Committee's consideration. She reassured Members that the Cabinet Committee were provided with the latest information available at the time and that the substance of the decision had not changed. She explained that further information had been provided to Scrutiny to provide Members with an up-to-date overview of developments. She reminded the Committee that further key decisions on Family Hubs transformation were expected and gave assurance that they would follow the Council's decision-making processes, including consideration by the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee before a decision is taken. It was noted that this would be subject to any deadlines imposed by the DfE. She reminded Members that the funding for Family Hubs transformation was in addition to existing service funding and provision.
4. Mr Collins responded to the questions asked by call-in proposer and seconder in their opening statements, confirming that: KCC's funding allocation was agreed by the DfE in March 2023; and there were 75 Family Hub transformation authorities nationally, including 14 trail blazers of which KCC was one.
5. Members commented that it was unreasonable to provide the Committee with reports two days ahead of the meeting and impacted their ability to scrutinise.
6. Members asked a range of questions. Key issues raised by the Committee and responded to by the Cabinet Member and officers present included the following:
 - a. Mr Collins clarified, following a question from a Member, that KCC were a Family Hubs wave two trailblazer.
 - b. Concerning the transformation programme's 39 deliverable actions, a Member noted that 31 had been given revised timeframes and asked why the completion of many actions had been delayed. Mr Collins explained that DfE timescales as well as Kent's scale were the primary reasons for the delays. Ms Birdi added that Kent's scale impacted delivery due to the large number of local partners which required engaging on the proposed transformation as part of the programme's co-production model. She added that consolidating the programme and completing deliverables was not possible until funding had been received from the DfE.

- c. Following a question from a Member, Mrs Chandler reassured the Committee that the Corporate Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) had been involved throughout the funding process and was sighted on the programme's procurement requirements.
- d. A Member asked whether any of the programme's funding streams and additionality were targeted at young people. Mrs Chandler explained that Family Hubs was a 3-year programme and that the decision in question did not include adolescent services. She noted that further funding was expected to be spent on additional areas, which could include youth services. She added that Parent and Carer Panels would investigate what Family Hubs could provide in the future. Mr Collins informed Members that first tranche of funding from the DfE was ring fenced for specific spend, which did not include adolescent services.
- e. Mr Collins confirmed, following a question from a Member, that the DfE required a statement of KCC's grant usage by 28 April 2023.
- f. Members raised concerns that it was not possible to fully understand the decision's implications and how Family Hubs would be delivered in communities, without knowing the impact of the Kent Communities Programme on KCC's estate.
- g. A Member asked for assurance that Family Hubs would not be used as a means for moving services wholly online. Ms Birdi reassured Members that the digital service offer would be in addition to face to face services.
- h. A Member asked whether KCC staff working in Family Hubs would receive additional training. Ms Jeffreys confirmed that there would be training as well as further learning and development opportunities for all partnership staff involved in the programme, including KCC, NHS Kent and Medway and Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) staff. Ms Birdi emphasised that the programme's strategy focused on developing a sustainable workforce.
- i. In response to a question from a Member on procurement arrangements, Ms Noake confirmed that existing contacts as well as national frameworks such as NHS Supply Chain would be utilised to shorten procurement timeframes and allow timely delivery.
- j. Clarification on the development of Parent and Carer Panels was sought by a Member, who asked for further information on how many there were across the county, their membership, size and authority. Ms Morley explained that existing Parent and Carer stakeholder groups had been engaged throughout the development process which informed initial decision-making and around the Start for Life offer and planning. She noted that there was an ambition for additional specific Panels to be extended to ensure seldom heard groups were included and that the panels were representative of Kent's diverse communities to be established and that there had been a proactive recruitment campaign launched in March 2023 to engage communities, parents and

carers, with the aspiration that they would be involved in the new Panels and members would start to see more activity over the coming weeks.

7. At the Chairman's invitation Mr Brady and Mr Hood summed up following the Committee's questions and debate. Mr Brady reemphasised the importance of providing non-executive Members with the necessary information to allow them to properly exercise their responsibilities to advise the Executive on proposed decisions and subsequently scrutinise decision which had been made. Mr Hood commented that the call-in had provided the required clarity for Members and had further informed their understanding of the decision and wider transformation programme.
8. The Committee stressed the importance of Members being frequently updated on developments related to Family Hubs transformation by means of both informal briefings and formal consideration at Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee and Scrutiny Committee.
9. Mrs Chandler thanked the Committee for their call-in, consideration of the decision, welcomed their continued interest and committed to regularly inform Members on the further development of the Family Hub transformation through briefings and committees, whilst also exploring other ways they could be updated.
10. The Chairman assured Members that Family Hubs transformation would be added to the Committee's work programme for consideration at a future meeting.
11. Mr Cooke moved and Mr Rayner seconded a motion that "the Scrutiny Committee express comments but do not require reconsideration of the decision."
12. Members voted on the motion. The motion passed by majority vote.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee express comments but do not require reconsideration of the decision.