

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SEND SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the SEND Sub-Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone, on Thursday 21 March 2024.

PRESENT: Mr P Cole (Chairman), Mrs B Bruneau (Vice-Chair), Mrs T Dean, Mr M Dendor, Mr H Rayner, Mr M Reidy, Mr A Sandhu and Dr L Sullivan.

VIRTUAL ATTENDEES: None

ALSO PRESENT: Ms B Hannon (Co-Chair, Kent PACT).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager) and Mr G Romagnuolo (Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

38. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S Prendergast and Mr M Whiting.

39. Declarations of Interest by Members in Items on the Agenda
(Item 3)

There were no Declarations of Interest.

40. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 7 February 2024
(Item 4)

A Member asked for clarification about which Committee would take on the scrutiny responsibility of the SEND Sub-Committee if this was disbanded. Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager) clarified that the decision of whether the SEND Sub-Committee should continue its activity or be disbanded rested solely with the Scrutiny Committee and that, should the SEND Sub-Committee be disbanded, the main scrutiny functions would return to the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Ms B Hannon in the attendance list. Also, Dr Sullivan wished that the minutes recorded that she voted against the motion.

41. SEND Sub-Committee - Annual Update Report
(Item 5)

- 1) Mr G Romagnuolo (Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny) introduced the report. He provided an overview of when the Sub-Committee was established, its main functions and its evidence gathering process.
- 2) Mr Rayner moved, and Mrs Bruneau seconded, a motion that “the SEND Sub-Committee **approve** the Annual Update Report of the SEND Sub-Committee, including relevant amendments agreed during the course the of the meeting”.
- 3) With regard to Paragraphs 1.6.11 and 1.11.7 (Paragraphs 2.2.11 and 2.7.7 in the revised version of the report) - where the report indicated that: *the number of EHC plans issued by East Sussex in 2022 was 518; in Kent it was 2,314 in 2022 and 2,005 in 2023* – a Member asked whether the report could include the percentage of these plans in comparison to the student population of each local authority (including the percentages in Kent both in 2022 and 2023), as this data would help with making a comparison, given the population difference between the two local authorities.
- 4) Given the significant public interest that the inquiry received, a Member asked that the report included the number of webcast viewings in each of the meetings of the SEND Sub-Committee.
- 5) The Chairman asked that, Paragraph 1.15.6 (2.11.6 in the revised version - which listed areas that required further exploration or clarification) included: *The provision and support afforded to families for whom their child(ren) with an EHCP (or awaiting an assessment) and/or SEN have been excluded or removed from a school setting.*
- 6) Ms B Hannon (Co-Chair, Kent PACT) said that she wished to thank the SEND Sub-Committee on behalf of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND for giving them the opportunity to be represented in the Sub-Committee and contribute to the enquiry.
 - a) She indicated that a vast amount of work had recently been done by KCC officers and Kent PACT to improve SEND provision in the county. She pointed out that the Accelerated Progress Plan’s Areas 1 and 3 (that is, *Area of weakness 1: A widely held concern of parents that the local area is not able, or in some cases not willing, to meet their children’s needs. Area of weakness 3: That parents and carers have a limited role in reviewing and designing services for children and young people with SEND*) were specifically around parents and carers, because their discontent was such that it was reflected in the Improvement Notice that was issued to KCC in March 2023.
 - b) She pointed out that, despite the vast amount of work, there had been little impact yet in these areas because it would take time before the full positive impact of many interventions and initiatives would be tangible.
- 7) A Member asked whether the CYPE Directorate could provide a briefing note to shed some light on the direction of demand for Kent services dealing with

ADHD, autism and dyslexia, as it was unclear whether the demand for each of these services was increasing or decreasing.

- 8) A Member asked that, Paragraph 1.15.6 (2.11.6 in the revised version - which listed areas that required further exploration or clarification) included: *The ongoing monitoring of the absence rates of Kent pupils with an EHCP.*
- 9) In answer to a comment the Chairman reiterated that - whether the SEND Sub-Committee was advised to continue its investigation or be disbanded - KCC had to ensure that an appropriate mechanism was in place to scrutinise SEND provision and hold the decision-makers to account, as the work of embedding and reviewing the various interventions continued.
- 10) At the conclusion of the debate, having taken advice from the Clerk and Democratic Services Manager, the Chair put a clarified and slightly amended version of the motion to the Sub-Committee.
- 11) RESOLVED through unanimous vote, that:
 - The SEND Sub-Committee Annual Report be **approved**; and
 - Authority be delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, to update the report in line with comments from the Sub-Committee and to finalise the report for publication and presentation to the Scrutiny Committee.
- 12) The Chairman thanked all those who contributed to the inquiry, for their dedication and support. He pointed out that, in relation to SEND service provision in Kent, it was important to ensure that lessons were learned. A focus had to be maintained on scrutinising SEND service provision and on improving SEND services for Kent's children and young people, and their families.
- 13) The Chairman thanked all those present for attending the meeting.