

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, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 24th September, 2024.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr D Beaney, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mrs L Game, Ms S Hamilton, Ms J Hawkins, Mr S C Manion, Mrs M McArthur, Ms J Meade, Mrs S Prendergast, Mr D Ross, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr P Stepto and Mr M Reidy

OTHER MEMBERS: Sue Chandler and Rory Love, OBE

OFFICERS: David Adams (Assistant Director Education (South Kent)), Sarah Hammond (Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education), Christy Holden (Head of Children's Commissioning), James Clapson (Democratic Services Officer), Simon Smith (PRU, Inclusion & Attendance Service Manager), Katherine Atkinson (Assistant Director, Management Information and Intelligence, Integrated Children's Services), Jude Farrell (Head of Service) and Kevin Kasaven (Director of Children's Countywide Services)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Ms Dawkins, Mr Roper and Mr Dendor for whom Ms Prendergast was present as substitute.

Mrs Game and Mr Ross were present virtually.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

Ms Prendergast advised that she was enrolled on a vocational course through the Community Learning and Skills service.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 were a correct record.

4. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 5)

1. Mr Love provided his Cabinet Member verbal update as follows:
 - Following the 12 month review visit by the Department for Education and the National Health Service, the Council's Special Education Needs and

Disabilities (SEND) Statutory Improvement Notice was lifted last month by the Minister for Children and Families.

- The performance of SEND services continued to improve and would remain a top priority.
- Mr Love visited the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School for their A Level results day. He saw the investment that had gone into the School and heard about their fundraising activities.
- Ms Hamilton, in her role as Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, visited Northfleet Technology Collage for their GCSE results day. She was particularly impressed with the School's nature reserve and science garden.
- Mr Love visited Westcourt Primary School on 13 August when a Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme was taking place. He attended alongside Steven Morgan MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for Education), and Dr Lauren Sullivan MP.

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

- £2million had been invested in SEND staffing as part of the last budget. The capacity within the teams would be kept under close review.
- The Chairman offered to speak to the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee about their review and analysis of the SEND service.
- Historically there have been a high number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) issued in Kent. Work would continue to ensure that the SEND Code of Practice was followed robustly to ensure that resources go to those most in need.

3. Mrs Chandler provided her Cabinet Member verbal update as follows:

- From October 2024 there would be a pilot of the lead professional role. It would take place for six months in several districts across the County. The lead professional role would allow social work assistants to have casework allocated to them that was commensurate with their skills and experience. There would be an evaluation at the end of the pilot and the Committee would receive an update on the findings
- Over the summer period staff had contributed their views to the redesign of the Adolescent and Youth Justice Service. The findings were condensed into several proposals which would be discussed at the Divisional Management Team meetings over the next few weeks.
- From September 2024, Early Help workers would co-deliver parenting support interventions with colleagues in family hubs. This would help to ensure families only had to tell their stories once in order to receive timely and targeted parenting support. Thanks were offered to all those working in the family hubs for the support they offered to thousands of children over the summer holidays.
- Frontline, a charity commissioned by DfE to introduce social workers into the workforce, would implement four hubs during September. They would support 20 students to become social workers by September 2025.
- Adult Social Services were preparing for a Care Quality Commission inspection of the 18-25 SIP service. It was scheduled for the week commencing 30 September.
- Two additional reception centres for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children were scheduled to come online during September. Thanks were offered to all the staff who worked with the children at the centres.

- Mrs Chandler had been very inspired by the aspirations of the young people when she attended the Virtual Scholls Kent Post 16 Awards Celebration, held at Marleybrook House in Canterbury.
- Mrs Chander attended an activity day for Children in Care at Wingham Wildlife Park on 19 August, the day was enjoyed by everyone.

4. The verbal updates were noted.

5. Performance Monitoring (Item 6)

1. Ms Atkinson introduced the Performance Monitoring report and highlighted that the number of late EHCP's assessments had continued to reduce. At the same point last year there were around 2000 open cases, and now there were 800 cases. Less than 100 of the 800 cases were over 20 weeks old.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - A high proportion of children excluded from school had SEND. The Accelerated Progress Plan has a section dedicated to inclusion, and suspensions and exclusions were being looked at by officers.
 - It was understood that children with SEND who attended specialist independent schools may be exempt from the new VAT charge on fees to attend private schools.
 - The VAT charge would come into force in January 2025 and could lead to less children attending private schools. If there were less students, smaller establishments could become financially unviable and if these schools closed there would be an increase in demand for places at LA maintained schools.
 - There were currently 95 private schools in Kent and some of these schools had nursery provision connected to them.
 - The behaviour of children was often cited as a reason why teachers were leaving the profession. £3million has been invested in school based training to support those working with children with SEND.
 - The Children's Wellbeing Bill referenced the provision of free breakfasts at school for some children. Further details about the proposals were awaited from Government.
3. RESOLVED to note the update.

6. Ofsted Update (Item 7)

1. Ms Atkinson introduced the Ofsted update and highlighted that Ofsted would no longer be issuing single word judgements to summarise their assessments.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The value of the report in its current form would be diminished without the one word judgements from Ofsted, as it would not be possible to benchmark performance against national averages in the same way.
 - At the moment it was not clear exactly what would replace the one word judgement, it was possible that a similar report could be produced in future.

3. RESOLVED to note the update and agree that the Committee would consider options for the reporting of Ofsted Performance at a future meeting.

7. 24/00084 - Education Health Needs Policy

(Item 8)

1. Mr Smith introduced the report that presented the Education Health Need Policy. He highlighted that the policy would help the Council to fulfil its statutory duties and meet the recommendations of the Ombudsman.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The Rosewood School provided a lot of support outside of the school environment.
 - Schools had a responsibility to make adaptations to support children to get back into education.
 - The Ombudsman's report would be circulated to the committee after the meeting.
3. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to:
 - a) Approve the Educational Health Needs Policy.
 - b) Confirm Rosewood as the ongoing provider for services under the Policy.
 - c) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to refresh and/or make revisions to the policy where changes do not require additional governance.
 - d) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, entering into and finalising the terms of relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the above decision.

8. 24/00085 - KCC CLS Sub-Contracting Education and Skills Funding Agency Provision

(Item 9)

1. Ms Farrell introduced the report. She highlighted that the sub-contracting rules had been amended to fill skills gaps and to align with the Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - There was a requirement to deliver new work based training. These resources were not available everywhere within the County.
 - The new funding rules no longer supported the funding of pleasure and leisure courses.
 - KCC was looking to deliver some vocational courses, but there were some courses that could not be offered by the Council and the Council did not want to compete with existing providers who had a high quality offering.
 - The performance of providers was monitored through inspections, and the procurement process ensured appropriate safeguards were in place.

3. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to:
 - a) Approve the sub-contracting of provision for vocational and specialist provision for adults.
 - b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts or other legal agreements as required, including Service Level agreements (SLAs), to implement this decision.

9. 24/00076 - Holiday Activities and Food Programme
(Item 10)

1. Ms Holden introduced the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) that would provide healthy food and activities for children and young people in receipt of benefits-related free schools meals, during the school holidays from 2025 onwards.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The existing programme was a three year commitment and would expire at the end of March 2025.
 - Recent benchmarking of the existing HAF indicated that it could be improved. Some areas for improvement included;
 - the system could be more user friendly,
 - access for those in rural areas was difficult,
 - the services could be better promoted,
 - the activities needed to be more engaging for young people.
 - The existing system would be used during the 2024 Christmas school holidays and, subject to government funding, for the 2025 Easter school holidays. The new arrangements would be fully in place for the 2025 summer holidays.
 - Transport links and accessibility were considered as part of the procurement process.
3. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services to:
 - a) Approve the proposed HAF delivery model and commissioning approach from 2025.
 - b) Commence formal procurement activity to tender for a service, award a contract(s) (three years, with a 12 month break clause), and develop robust contract management for oversight of the contract(s) performance.
 - c) Confirm that in accordance with Decision 23/00009, that Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education accept Future allocations of the Holiday Activity and Food Grant for use in accordance with the grant determination letter. This will be issued by the Department for Education and the relevant terms and conditions, provided these remain substantially the same as the current; and to delegate authority to the Director of Education and SEN to manage and deploy the accepted Holiday Activity and Food Grant in accordance with the grant conditions and arrangements detailed in the report, including entering into contracts through a compliant procurement route and have a team in place to roll out the HAF Programme from 2025-2026 and beyond.

- d) Delegate authority to the Director of Education and SEN, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts, Service Level Agreements (SLAs) or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

10. Work Programme 2024-25
(Item 11)

1. RESOLVED to note the work programme.