

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, 17th January, 2023.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr D Beaney, Mr A Brady, Mrs B Bruneau, Mr G Cooke, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Ms S Hamilton, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr A Sandhu, MBE and Mr H Rayner

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Canon Dr Roper and Ms McArthur.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2022
(Item 4)

1) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2022 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

2) Mr Cooke asked for it to be noted that he had given apologies which had not been recorded in the minutes.

4. Draft Ten Year Capital Programme, Revenue Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-26
(Item 5)

Zena Cooke, Corporate Director (Finance) was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Oakford outlined the report. The settlement KCC was to receive from government was better than had been anticipated. However, it fell short of what was needed to balance the budget. There were still enormous pressures due to inflation and the demand within Adults' and Children's Social Care. Growth spending demand had increased by £216 million, £64 million being KCC's base budget pressure and prices at around £70 million. KCC needed to find around £40 million worth of savings. There was increased income within the budget of £16 million – this was where KCC was having to increase its charges for services and there was still the need for a draw-down from reserves in some areas in order to balance the budget.

Insecure funding was normally put into reserves but had been diverted into KCC's base budget. The budget assumed that all of the savings for 2023-2024 would be delivered and it was acknowledged that that savings were not always achieved in the past. A £12 million risk reserve had been included in the budget to offset savings not achieved. The 4.99% council tax increase had been assumed in the budget.

2) Mrs Chandler said statutory and Early Help services were being prioritised in line with budget consultation responses from residents. There had been an increase in demand, in terms of complexity and of population. However, it was recognised that while there had been an increase in children in care, this increase was not as substantial as in much of the country.

Savings were to be made in Children's Services by reducing the authority's dependency on agency staff, continuing efforts in relation to recruitment and retention of social work staff. There were also a range of efficiency savings including reviews of placements, Early Help, Open Access, legal services. There were some services that were being incorporated into mainstream social work. There were to be changes to services for Care Leavers to encourage independence by age 19 and there had been a decision made to remove grants to Local Children's Partnership Groups.

3) Mr Love said that they had sought to protect schools' annual enhancement and maintenance budget for high priority projects and had made provision to cover the current year's overspend. There was investment in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities with provision for increased SEN home to school transport costs. Inflationary increases had been factored in throughout the budget and it was recognised that there were limited opportunities for savings within the Education and Skills portfolio.

4) Further to debate, it was noted that:

- Information was requested around the review of the Practice Development Service as well as changes to the budgets for Early Help and Preventative Services. Concerns were raised that the information and level of detail given to Members of Cabinet Committees was insufficient and that in the past, detailed analysis was produced for each Cabinet Committee to have a fuller understanding of the effect of the budget on individual services.
- Queries were made about the effect of the Safety Valve Agreement on the budget and some Members felt that without more detail, it was unclear how the budget was affected. It was highlighted that it was the Department for Education's approach for these details not to be publicised.
- It was suggested that the savings proposed in relation to SEND were unachievable and that Members were being asked to agree a budget without a full picture in relation to the SEND deficit and the Safety Valve. It was suggested that Members were being asked to take what was being proposed 'on trust'. Concerns were raised about the possibility of a Section 114 Notice.
- A summary of the Section 151 Officer's responsibilities and powers was given and the process around the issuance of a Section 114 Notice, as well

as a summary of actions moving forward. There was to be close monitoring to ensure there was not a repeated overspend and action was to be taken to restore KCC's reserves.

- Questions were raised about how children were to be kept at the centre of CYPE's work and the effect of the budget on staff morale.
- Budget changes around services to Care Leavers were focussed on accommodation and support for the young people to have independence in this regard at an earlier stage- as KCC's duties were that Care Leavers were in safe and suitable accommodation but not to subsidise housing.
- There were questions around services provided to schools and it was confirmed that schools had the choice not to use those services provided by the authority through The Education People.
- It was questioned whether KCC had sufficient assets to deliver its services.

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

5. SEND Update
(Item 6)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director (Children's, Young People and Education) was in attendance for this item

- 1) Mr Love updated Members regarding the establishment of a Scrutiny Sub-Committee to consider KCC's SEND provision.
- 2) Ms Hammond gave an update to Members on the following:
 - There had been challenges with recruitment within SEND but recruitment was ongoing as they had not been able to recruit to all posts in the first instance. The establishment of the 'Enquiries Hub' was a particular focus of activity in order to provide parents and carers with a 'one-stop shop' with answers quickly. This had been a priority for recruitment.
 - KCC had liaised with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the South East Sector Led Improvement Partnership (SESLIP).
 - KCC and its partners had accepted the offer of an Independent Chair for the SEND Assurance Board.
 - A backlog review team had been in place since early December working on reviews for EHCPs and this was resulting in a slow reduction of overall numbers of EHCPs. There had been meetings with the School Funding Forum and the Local Inclusion Forums and with special school head teachers.

3) RESOLVED to note the update.

6. School Funding Arrangements for 2023-24

(Item 7)

Karen Stone, CYPE Finance Business Partner and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director (Children's, Young People and Education) were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Stone outlined the report.

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

- The transfer of 1% from the schools to the high needs block to fund SEN support services within schools was added to the amount schools already had in high needs funding. The expectation was that this 1% transfer was to be used for SEN support services within the mainstream setting- such as the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service.

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

7. Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership Annual Report

(Item 8)

Michael Thomas-Sam, Systems Improvement Manager and Laura Wright, Learning&Development and Policy Advisor were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Thomas-Sam outlined the report.

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

- The ambition was to agree a set of dynamic datasets, which would measure and show partners how well things were working.
- It was outlined in the KSCMP partnership agreement that the executive board acted on behalf of the 3 organisations. The executive board held ultimate responsibility, supported by a number of sub-group and the scrutiny and challenge group reported to the executive board.
- It was intended that data in future annual reports would be able to measure the impact of the KSCMP on the safeguarding of children.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

8. Proposed Co-ordinated Schemes for Primary and Secondary Schools in Kent and Admission Arrangements for Primary and Secondary Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2024/25

(Item 9)

Craig Chapman, Head of Fair Access was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Chapman outlined the report.

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

- From a schools' admissions perspective, the standard across county councils across the country was the 'straight-line' measurement. It was recognised that there were examples where the journey to the school may

be different and questions might be asked by parents around this. However, it was felt that the straight line distance was the fairest way to consider admissions and school offers.

- When considering school transport, straight line measurements would not be appropriate because it is considering a child's physical journey to school. KCC's guidance makes clear the distinction between the two considerations.

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

9. Confirmation of forthcoming Transport Consultation
(Item 10)

Craig Chapman, Head of Fair Access was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Chapman outlined the report.

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

- The consultation included open questions to allow respondents to raise any points not covered by the other more specific questions.
- A further report was to come to Cabinet Committee following the consultation. A request was made for a further briefing.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

10. Kent County Council's Family Hub model development
(Item 11)

Hema Birdi, Assistant Director (Adolescents and Open Access) and Stuart Collins, Director of Integrated Children's Services were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Collins outlined the report.

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

- It queried whether what had been presented at the briefing on Community Asset Consultation aligned with KCC's Family Hub model development. However, it was explained that the report dealt with the principles of the Family Hub model. While there was some connection, the results of the Community Asset consultation were yet to be considered and would be considered alongside the principles of KCC's Family Hub model.
- There was a significant commitment to community outreach as part of the Family Hubs model. Concerns were raised that the offer for many might be digital-only and that the right infrastructure was required.

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

11. Regional Residential Procurement Project: "DfE Phase 2"
(Item 12)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services) and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director (CYPE) were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Holden outlined the report.

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

- The ambition was to work with local service providers to re-purpose existing homes and for them to have a different relationship with the local authority. The aim was for the change in relationship with providers to result in better quality and better value for money for KCC. As part of commissioning processes, in-house options were explored and considered.
- If the responses from the market did not meet the ambitions set out, a contract did not have to be awarded.

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

12. Commission a new Domestic Abuse Support Service for those residing in Safe Accommodation
(Item 13)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services) and Helen Cook, Senior Commissioner – Community Resilience were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Holden outlined the report.

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

- The expectation from government that training was to be community-based, delivered by partners and it was not expected that it would be accredited learning.

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

13. Reception and Safe Care Centre
(Item 14)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services) was in attendance for this item

1) Ms Holden outlined the report.

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

- Property searches had been undertaken and it had been looked at whether there was property internally available. However, the Reception and Safe Care Centre was not a KCC provision and was a national centre funded by the Home Office.

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

14. Expansion of Sir Roger Manwood's School

(Item 15)

David Adams, Area Education Officer (South Kent) was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Adams outlined the report.

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

15. Proposal to establish a new 2FE Primary School with 26 place Nursery in Thanington

(Item 16)

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

1) Ms White outlined the report.

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

- New schools were usually opened gradually, year by year. If a school was to open with intake of more than one year group, there could be sudden 'de-camps' from other schools and not necessarily from families living closer to the school. Subject to consultation and with the academy sponsor, the admissions criteria could include (for a limited time) that priority be given to children in the developments in the immediate area surrounding a new school.

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

16. Teynham Primary School - Expansion of Teynham Primary School by 1FE

(Item 17)

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

1) Ms White outlined the report.

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

- The school had been maintaining the original building- and it was the original quality of the building which was causing problems. Therefore, there were considerable costs if it were to be refurbished and expanded.
- Concerns were raised about the low number of consultation responses.

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

17. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members

(Item 18)

1) Mr Love reported details of the 2022 GCSE and A Level results in Kent.

Out of 17,254 Kent pupils completing GCSEs in 2022, the average attainment 8 score (the government metric which factors in English, Maths and English

Baccalaureate subjects) was 49.8. This put Kent in line with the national average, but ahead of neighbouring counties such as East Sussex and Essex.

There was still a notable gender divide. 71.1% of Kent's girls achieved a standard or strong pass in both English and Maths compared with 66.1% of Kent's boys; a difference of 5%. However, this was a reduction of the gap in 2019 which was 8.7%, so the gender gap had shrunk.

Out of 7,089 Kent students getting their A-level results in 2022, 86.2% achieved 2 or more passes. This was slightly below the national average of 88%. However, Kent was in line with the national average when it came to achieving 3 or more A* and A grades, with both coming in at 21.3%. Gender differences were more of a mixed picture at A-level, with Kent's girls more likely to achieve 3 or more A* and A grades, but boys more likely to achieve AAB or better. The national picture showed boys outperforming girls in both of these metrics, in stark contrast to the outcomes found at GCSE level.

376 Kent students also completed T Level qualifications in 2022, with average results being within half a percentage point of the national average. This was the first cohort of students to complete the two-year long courses which were introduced in September 2020, and include a mixture of practical, knowledge and on-the-job based learning via an industry placement. It was hoped that the take-up of T Levels would continue to grow and help ensure businesses had the skilled workforce they needed for success.

It was confirmed that the Department of Education had announced that 8 schools within Kent (excluding Medway) had been successful in their bids under the School Rebuilding Programme. The successful schools were a mix of both primary and secondary and the funding was to ensure they had premises which were fit for the future, whilst opening up opportunities for expansion.

On Tuesday, 10 January, Mr Love visited Simon Langton Girls' School to see the Biojoyversity programme in action. This started out as a Royal Society funded project carried out by the sixth form students at Simon Langton Girls' School. It involved an experiment to find out of being amongst nature affected pupil's wellbeing, and it was discovered that self-reported happiness was significantly higher after walking through an area with high biodiversity. This was when the term Biojoyversity was coined.

Going forward, the biojoyversity programme were to collaborate with a number of schools across the county to help improve student wellbeing, whilst also focusing on issues such as tackling waste, recycling and carbon reduction. A range of competitions, activities and events were taking place as part of this.

Mr Love had met with Alison White and Vicky Evans from Kent PACT and was looking forward to working with further with Kent PACT.

2) It was agreed due to time constraints, that Mrs Chandler's update (detailed below) be sent out to Member by email:

1) UASC Update

I can now confirm the final UASC referral figures for 2022, which came in at 1,378. This is significantly higher than the previous record of 917 back in 2015. I'd like to pay tribute to all the staff who have been dealing with UASC referrals during what has been an extremely challenging year.

As of 13th January, there have been 35 UASC referrals since the start of the month.

KCC is now up to the threshold of 0.1% of its total child population as UASC under the National Transfer Scheme, with this quota having been increased from 0.07% back in August. We know there are many local authorities yet to reach the 0.1% level, so we very much hope the government will continue to ensure that allocations are spread evenly across the country to avoid a disproportionate pressure on Kent.

2) Retention of Social Workers

Retaining qualified social workers is a challenge that KCC and many other local authorities face. Social work is an extremely rewarding career we know there are a range of internal and external pressures which affect retention. Government figures have shown that there has been a 16% increase in those leaving the profession in the past year, the highest number in the last five years.

To help us better understand the landscape we are facing in social work, I'm pleased to announce that Kent County Council has agreed to be part of a research project run by The University of Kent. This will reflect on the experiences of those who qualified as social workers in the last three to five years (2017 to 2019). The goal is to understand what keeps them working at the local authority and what might be a reason for them to leave. Social work staff across Kent who had joined the authority between 2017 and 2019 have been invited to take part in a short 30-minute interview on an anonymous basis as part of the study.

The project will provide initial findings in March 2023 and we will be paying close attention to the outcomes to see what measures we can put in place to ensure continuous improvement.

3) Christmas Appeal

I'd like to give a huge thank you to all the individuals and organisations across Kent who donated to this year's Corporate Parenting Christmas Appeal.

We set out with a goal of raising £20,000 in order to provide every care leaver in Kent with a £10 gift voucher. I'm pleased to say that following a late flurry of donations, we ended up raising almost £37,000, almost double our original target.

I know just how much these gestures would have meant to care leavers so it's really great that we were able to accomplish so much, even in times where many are experiencing economic hardship.

4) YLF Volunteering

This appeal was made possible with the support of the The Young Lives Foundation, an organisation which I know many of you here today will be familiar with. The YLF are currently looking for volunteers who can act as positive role models for children and young people across the county.

If you or anyone you know would be interested in volunteering time to help with areas such as mentoring, befriending, custody support or helping out at events, I would strongly encourage visiting the YLF website for more information at www.ylf.org.uk.

18. Performance Monitoring

(Item 19)

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence was in attendance for this item

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report. There had been updates to some of the attainment data and the Free for 2 uptake data from the autumn of 2022 had been made available which was up to 73%.

There had been agreement that a SEND section was to be developed for the CYPE Scorecard and this was still being worked on.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

19. Ofsted Update

(Item 20)

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence was in attendance for this item

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

20. Work Programme

(Item 21)

RESOLVED to note the Work Programme.