

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2017

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Sameem Ali, Alijah, Collins, Hewitson, T Judge, Lovecy, Madeleine Monaghan [CYP/17/46 - CYP/17/51], K Simcock [CYP/17/45 - CYP/17/50], Stone and Taylor

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mrs J Miles, Representative of the Diocese of Salford [CYP/17/45 - CYP/17/48]

Ms M Neall, Parent Governor Representative

Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Mr L Duffy, Secondary sector teacher representative

Councillor S Newman, Executive Member for Children's Services

Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure

Councillor Sheikh, Assistant Executive Member for Children's Services

Julia Stephens-Row, Independent Chair of the Manchester Safeguarding Children Board

Ally Fogg, Friends of Nutsford Vale

Jenny Lightfoot, Arup

Dr Kate Canning, Arup

Ms Harrison, Arup

Apologies:

Councillor Lone

Mrs B Kellner, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Ms J Gudgeon, Primary sector teacher representative

CYP/17/45 Minutes

Decisions

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2017.
2. To receive the minutes of the Ofsted Subgroup meeting held on 12 September 2017.
3. To receive the minutes of the Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group meeting held on 12 September 2017.

CYP/17/46 Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services and Julia Stephens-Row, Independent Chair of the MSCB, which provided an overview of the work of the partnership from April 2016 - March 2017.

The report outlined the work undertaken across a range of organisations and in partnership to safeguard children and young people in Manchester and some of key pieces of work undertaken by the MSCB. It also provided information on the work of the various sub groups which report to the Board. The Independent Chair of the MSCB referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:-

- MSCB's business priorities;
- Challenges and improvement
- Priorities for MSCB in 2017/2018

Some of the key points which arose from the Committee's discussions were:-

- What progress had been made in improving schools' engagement with the MSCB's website
- The work undertaken to address the issue of children missing from education
- Work to address the training needs of the children's workforce
- How to ensure that the voice of the child was embedded
- How the varied aspects of complex safeguarding were being addressed
- Concerns about the safeguarding of children in employment

The Independent Chair reported that a lot of work had taken place to update the website and promote it to schools, including producing a newsletter which encouraged schools to use the website. She informed Members about work to reduce the amount of time between children receiving an offer of a school place and starting school. It was reported that the MSCB wanted to use information regarding allegations made against members of the children's workforce to provide targeted training to particular staff groups and reduce further incidents. The Committee was advised that the Board had an assurance process and, as part of this, partners were required to carry out a self-assessment which included a section on the voice of the child. It was reported that a lot of good work was being done by partners to embed the voice of the child in their work and that the MSCB was working to improve this further. The Independent Chair advised that operational groups were in place for each theme within complex safeguarding and that the leads for each of these were part of the MSCB's Complex Safeguarding Subgroup. Members were informed that the Board received a report on one Complex Safeguarding theme at each of its meetings. The Committee was advised that there were a lot of regulations in place regarding children in employment and that these were enforced through the Education Service and through Trading Standards.

Decisions

1. To note the publication of the MSCB Annual Report 2016 – 2017.
2. To agree that the Committee will promote the importance of safeguarding of children and young people across MCC and in the services that are commissioned, ensuring that safeguarding is at the heart of all that is delivered.
3. To receive a report on the employment of children, including related licensing activity, at a future meeting.

CYP/17/47 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report

The Committee received a report of the Head of Quality Assurance for Safeguarding which provided an account of the activity of the Independent Reviewing Service between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

The Head of Quality Assurance for Safeguarding delivered a presentation which included:-

- The purpose of the IRO role;
- The findings from the 2014 Ofsted inspection in relation to the IRO Service;
- The current position, including the findings of Ofsted's 2017 Monitoring Visit;
- The impact of the IRO Service;
- Future plans; and
- The Safeguarding and Improvement Unit's achievements over the past year

Some of the key points which arose from the Committee's discussions were:-

- What work was taking place to improve the consistency of social work practice
- Access to Independent Visitors for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)
- The benefits of proposals to introduce the 'Mind of My Own' app to improve the voice and influence of children and young people

The Head of Quality Assurance for Safeguarding outlined actions being taken to improve the consistency of social work practice and the key role the IRO Service played in driving improvements. She advised that there was now a robust 'closing the loop' process to ensure that findings on quality of practice were communicated to social work staff and that they were clear on what needed to happen to improve. She clarified that all Looked After Children, including UASC, were entitled to have an Independent Visitor but it was up to the young person if they wanted to have one.

The Executive Member for Children's Services reported that substantial improvements had been made to the IRO service which were making a difference in the lives of children and young people and that she had been very impressed when she had visited the service.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. To request that the Scrutiny Support Officer circulate a copy of the presentation to Members by email.

CYP/17/48 New Central / East Secondary School

Councillor Reid informed the Committee that she would not chair this item due to a conflict of interest, referring to her comments in the minutes from the previous meeting, and that Councillor K Simcock would chair this item.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Education which provided a

further update on progress to establish a new secondary school in central / east Manchester, which was approved by the Executive in December 2016, in order to meet a growing need for secondary school places.

The report provided a summary of the independent review conducted by Arup into work originally carried out by Laing O'Rourke and Ramboll to determine the site conditions of Nutsford Vale and identified a remediation strategy to enable a new school to be built. It also addressed comments outstanding from the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting on 5 September 2017. Officers and guests from Arup referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:-

- Initial site investigations;
- The Arup Review;
- Review of an alternative site; and
- Retention of the green lung.

A representative from Friends of Nutsford Vale addressed the Committee, emphasising the importance of children having access to green spaces, fresh air and nature. He reported that, while his group accepted Arup's findings that the work so far had been conducted to acceptable professional standards, there were still unanswered questions relating to costs and issues arising from a similar scheme in a neighbouring local authority and that it had not been possible to undertake risk assessments on the proposed remedial strategies as these had not yet been developed or made available. He expressed concern that the complete data from the consultation process had not been provided to the Committee and that his Freedom of Information (Fol) request for this information had not been responded to.

Some of the key points which arose from the Committee's discussions were:-

- Why the Fol request had not been responded to;
- What other sites had been considered;
- What information was known about the landfill site and its safety;
- The next steps in the process; and
- Whether a covenant could be placed on the rest of the land.

The Director of Education advised Members that the other sites which had been considered had been outlined in the report which the Committee had received at its September meeting and that the current report detailed a further site which had been considered but then discounted. She advised that information on the consultation responses had been included in the September report and that she would follow up on the Fol request.

A representative from Arup reported that the site was a claypit which was then used as landfill and subsequently capped. She advised that there was nothing found in the records to suggest that the site had radiological contamination but that excavated waste would need to be scanned to check for unforeseen contamination. She advised that the contractor Ramboll had applied the standard approach for assessing brownfield sites and had demonstrated that the risks could be mitigated and that they would be required to provide this detail as part of the planning process.

The Interim Major Projects Lead outlined the next steps, advising that this proposal was likely to be considered by the Planning Committee in January 2018.

The Director of Trading Services advised that the proposed school would take up about a third of the Nutsford Vale site and that the Council was willing to explore the option of a covenant on the rest of the site as part of work to improve and invest in the site and protect it for future use.

The Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure reported that other schools had been built on contaminated land with appropriate remedial action taking place to ensure that they were safe. He emphasised that the Council would not build a school which was not safe and that there were lots of checks and balances in the process to ensure safety. He advised Members that the Council wanted to work with the Friends of Nutsford Vale, local residents and other users of the Nutsford Vale site to enhance the offer on the remaining two-thirds of the site.

Decisions

1. To note the outcome and conclusions of the Arup independent review of the work undertaken by Laing O'Rourke and Ramboll to investigate site conditions and determine how the site can be remediated to enable the construction of a secondary school.
2. To note the review undertaken of an alternative site proposed for the required new secondary school.
3. To note the availability of 'Green Lung' open space that will continue after the development of the proposed school.
4. To note that the Free School Academy presumption process to identify the Council's preferred provider for the proposed new school will commence shortly.
5. To note that there will be a further opportunity to make representations at Planning Committee, for those who wish to do so.

[Councillors Reid and Stone declared a personal interest as they had supported the 'Save Nutsford Vale' campaign.]

CYP/17/49 Attainment and Attendance

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which provided a summary of the 2017 provisional outcomes of statutory assessment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. It also provided an update on the final school attendance figures for half term 1-6 from 2012/13 to 2015/16.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:-

- The outcomes at each Key Stage;
- The next steps for further improvement; and
- Attendance trends.

Some of the key points which arose from the Committee's discussions were:-

- Phonics testing and whether phonics helped children to learn to read;
- How the attendance figures for the Secondary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) compared to other high schools;
- A request that a detailed breakdown of the data, including data on pupils who were from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, had English as an Additional Language (EAL) or Special Educational Needs (SEN) and outcomes for boys and girls, be provided to the Committee when this became available; and
- Recognition of the hard work of teachers and other school staff.

The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer reported that good phonics outcomes did not translate into good reading outcomes, both in Manchester and nationally, but that phonics teaching was required as part of the National Curriculum.

The Director of Education agreed to provide the attendance figures for the Secondary PRU. She reported that a detailed breakdown of attainment data would be available in February 2018.

The Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure paid tribute to the achievements of teaching staff in Manchester schools.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. To request that the Committee receive more detailed information in a future report, when this is available.

CYP/17/50 Curriculum for Life

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Education which provided a summary of the progress made to develop a Curriculum for Life for children and young people in the city.

The report outlined proposals for a Curriculum for Life to equip children and young people with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the real world. The Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure introduced the report, referring to the main points and themes which included:-

- the main issues raised by young people and employers;
- the case for change;
- where the current Manchester offer for children and young people could be strengthened; and
- high level proposals for how the work could be taken forward using an Our Manchester approach, working with children, young people, employers, education providers and wider stakeholders to co-design and co-deliver a curriculum.

Some of the key points which arose from the Committee's discussions were:-

- how the Council could work with academies to encourage them to engage with the Curriculum for Life;
- the importance of promoting the cultural offer of the city to children and young people;
- what progress had been made in making sex and relationship education (SRE) compulsory; and
- to request information on plans to evaluate the Curriculum for Life.

The Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure suggested that Members received a more detailed report at a future meeting, once this work had been developed further. He reported that a lot of work was taking place to encourage people from all communities to access the city's cultural offer and that the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee would be considering reports on this at its meeting on 12 October 2017.

The Director of Education reported that academies were part of the Manchester family of schools, that the Council did not have a problem with engaging with academies and that levels of engagement depended on the individual headteacher rather than the status of the school. She advised that a lot of schools were keen to introduce the Curriculum for Life. She informed Members that there were already examples of good practice in a number of schools in teaching some of these topics but that the Curriculum for Life would bring this all together in a cohesive way across Manchester schools.

The Head of Youth Strategy reported that the government expected compulsory SRE in secondary schools from 2018 and in primary schools from 2019, at an appropriate level for the age group.

Decisions

1. To note the report
2. To receive a more detailed report at an appropriate time, to include more information on the governance and delivery of the Curriculum for Life and how it will be evaluated.

CYP/17/51 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve.

Decision

To note the report and approve the work programme.