

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2018

Present:

Councillor Stone – in the Chair
Councillors Alijah, Hewitson, T Judge and Lovecy

Co-opted Voting Members:

Ms M Neall, Parent Governor Representative [CYP/18/19 - CYP/18/25]
Ms Z Stepan, Parent Governor Representative

Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Mr R Lammas, Primary sector teacher representative

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children's Services
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure

Apologies:

Councillors Collins, McHale and Madeleine Monaghan
Mr L Duffy, Secondary sector teacher representative
Mrs B Kellner, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester
Mrs J Miles, Representative of the Diocese of Salford

CYP/18/19 Anniversary of the Manchester Arena terror attack

The Chair noted that this meeting had originally been scheduled for 22 May 2018, the anniversary of the Manchester Arena terror attack. The Committee held a minute's silence to reflect on the events of 22 May 2017 and the commemoration events taking place the following day.

CYP/18/20 Councillor Julie Reid and Councillor Garry Bridges

The Chair thanked Councillor Julie Reid for chairing the Committee for the previous four years. He also congratulated Councillor Garry Bridges on his appointment as Executive Member for Children's Services.

CYP/18/21 Minutes

Decisions

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2018.
2. To receive the minutes of the Ofsted Subgroup meeting held on 20 March 2018.
3. To receive the minutes of the Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group meeting on 21 March 2018.

CYP/18/22 Final Report and Recommendations of the Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group

The Committee received the final report of the Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group which presented the findings of their investigation. The report was also submitted to the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee. The Chair requested information on how the £1.8m investment would be spent and the schools which would be involved in the trials. The Director of Education advised the Committee that she would have an update on this soon and would communicate it to Members.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/18/23 Children and Young People's Services – Overview and key issues

The Strategic Director of Children's Services provided the Committee with an oral report on the key issues within Children's Services. He informed Members about the integration of children's services and education services, advising that the attainment of children in school was affected by their circumstances and the challenges they faced outside of school. He drew Members' attention to the priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan, outlined within the report for the following item, and suggested that the Committee might want to scrutinise some of these areas.

The Chair informed Members that at the rise of the meeting, Members would have a Work Programming session to determine which issues they wanted to scrutinise over the forthcoming year. He recommended that the Committee receive an annual report on the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) as, while all Members of the Council were invited to attend CPP meetings, this did not include Co-opted Members of the Committee.

Decision

To recommend that the Committee receive an annual report on the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP).

CYP/18/24 Post Ofsted Improvement Plan Update - Continually improving Children's and Education Services and Post-Inspection Action Planning

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director and the Deputy Director of Children's Services which provided an overview of the action plan developed to deliver the recommendations set out in Ofsted's Re-Inspection of Children's Services report published on 21st December 2017. It also outlined the arrangements and planning in place within Children's and Education Services to respond to the presenting challenges and opportunities to improve the experiences and outcomes of Manchester's children and young people and for services to continually improve.

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

- The structure of the action plan;
- The delivery of the action plan; and
- The recommendations, including progress, risk and next steps.

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

- What additional support could be provided to schools admitting pupils with additional needs, such as English as an Additional Language (EAL), in-year;
- Recruitment and retention of social workers;
- To request more data in a future report; and
- What support was available to people involved in private fostering.

The Director of Education informed Members that the Council no longer had services to directly support pupils with EAL or other additional needs; however, she advised that each school's funding took into account the number of pupils with additional needs and EAL and the transience of the pupil population. She reported that the In Year Fair Access Protocol (IYFAP) worked to ensure a fair distribution of pupils arriving in-year with additional needs. She advised that schools could apply for emergency funding from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for pupils with very complex needs and that they could also access free support from special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). The Deputy Director of Children's Services reported that the Council had recently carried out a successful recruitment campaign for social workers and informed Members of the actions being taken to improve retention. The Strategic Director of Children's Services informed Members that he would provide a Children's Services scorecard, which included proxy indicators on progress to improve children's services, to a future meeting.

The Strategic Director of Children's Services clarified the difference between private fostering, where a child was placed with someone who was not a close relative, and situations where a child was cared for by a 'connected person' who was a close relative. He outlined the Council's duties in relation to private fostering, including providing advice and support, and advised that there was a need to raise public awareness of private fostering. He informed Members that, where a local authority had assessed that it was not suitable for a child to live with their parent at the present time, the child could be placed with a close relative, as a connected person arrangement. He advised that the connected person's suitability would be assessed and that they would be provided with support, including financial support and training. He advised that making the arrangement legally binding, through a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), was beneficial in making children feel more secure.

Decisions

1. To note the work that has been undertaken since the re-inspection of Children's Services and the completion of the Post Ofsted Action Plan.
2. To seek a future report outlining the impact of the actions referred to in the report under recommendation 1.

3. To request that the Children's Services scorecard, which includes proxy indicators on progress to improve children's services, be submitted to a future meeting.

CYP/18/25 Looked After Children and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy Review

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services which provided an update on progress of the strategy to achieve 'sufficient' range and choice of care placements for Manchester's looked after children (LAC) and care leavers.

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

- Data, including comparator information, and analysis on the number of LAC;
- Data, including comparator information, and analysis of the number of LAC in different types of placement;
- Placement resources and the market; and
- Progress made so far and next steps.

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

- Why the number of LAC was increasing;
- What the demographics of the LAC population were;
- Whether the decrease in the number of children becoming Looked After as a result of Police Protection Powers was a positive sign;
- How many LAC were placed outside of the city; and
- How the recruitment of foster carers could be improved.

The Strategic Director of Children's Services advised that he could provide further information on the demographics of the LAC population, provided that the figures involved were not so low as to risk identifying a child. He outlined the Police Protection Powers, which allowed the police to remove a child from their home to a place of safety, and advised Members that the reduced number was a positive sign that social workers were intervening in a timely, sufficient way. He advised that nearly 90% of LAC were placed within Greater Manchester. He reported that those placed furthest away were usually those with very complex needs and a greater range and choice of placements was needed in Greater Manchester so that they could be placed nearer.

Decisions

1. To request a further report in the 2018/2019 municipal year to update on progress and impact.
2. To request that this report includes consideration of the reasons why the number of LAC is increasing in Manchester and nationally and information on the placement of sibling groups.
3. To request that the methods of recruitment for foster carers be reviewed

through the Corporate Parenting Panel and then reported back to the Committee.

CYP/18/26 School Place Planning and Admissions

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which provided an overview of mainstream primary and secondary school admissions for September 2018. The report also provided a view on the level of demand for special school and Alternative Provision (AP) places and sought approval to invest capital funding to secure sufficient capacity. The Committee was invited to comment on the report prior to its submission to the Executive on 30 May 2018.

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

- School admission applications for 2018/19;
- School population forecast and how the Council was working with partners to respond to the demand for mainstream school places;
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and the response to demand for specialist provision;
- Alternative Provision (AP) and the response to the demand for this; and
- The recommendation that capital funding be invested to secure sufficient capacity.

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

- The impact of the closure of Manchester Creative Studio on school place provision;
- Whether the pupils who did not receive their first choice of school came from any particular wards or backgrounds;
- The decreasing demand for reception year places and whether this would disproportionately affect some schools;
- The quality of some of the buildings used for AP; and
- Whether pupils who had been excluded from school for five or more days were receiving appropriate education.

The Director of Education informed Members that the Manchester Creative Studio, which had provided a small number of places for 14 to 18 year olds, was due to close at the end of the academic year by which time all remaining pupils would have completed their GCSEs or A-Levels. The Head of Access and Education confirmed that 77% of Manchester pupils who had applied for a Year 7 place had been allocated a place at their first preference school and 93% had been allocated a place at one of their preferred schools. She advised that this year there were no particular wards where children were disproportionately less likely to get a place at a preferred school but she offered to provide Members with ward-level data. The Director of Education acknowledged that the demand for reception year places had reduced but advised that the Council could not ensure that this reduction was spread evenly across schools as school allocation was based on parental preference. She advised Members that it was beneficial to have a surplus of school places so that in-year arrivals could be accommodated but that the Council would monitor this. She reported that the Council was working with the Primary and Secondary PRUs on a

range of issues, including building improvements, but that it was important to have a mix of different AP providers with different curricula, in addition to the PRUs. She reported that schools were legally required to provide education to pupils who were excluded for five or more days but that this could take the form of sending work home for them to complete.

Decision

To endorse the recommendation to the Executive that they:

1. Note the data relating to September 2018 admissions;
2. Support the principle that Basic Need funding is used to secure specialist and Alternative Provision school places;
3. Agree that the Council publish its plan to use its allocation of Special Educational Needs and Disability capital funding (£2.4m) to create additional specialist places;
4. Agree that the Council begins consulting to gather local views on a more extensive plan to secure sufficient Specialist provision and Alternative Provision school places; and
5. Delegate responsibility to the Director of Education through the Strategic Capital Board to use capital funding to develop Specialist provision and Alternative Provision school places.

[Councillor Stone declared a personal interest as a member of the governing body of the Secondary Pupil Referral Unit.]

CYP/18/27 Re-establishment of the Ofsted Subgroup

The Committee received a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided members with the terms of reference and the current work programme for the Ofsted Subgroup. The Committee was asked to re-establish the Ofsted Subgroup for the 2018-19 municipal year and agree the terms of reference, work programme and membership of the Subgroup.

A Member requested that the Subgroup consider the Ofsted inspection report for Newall Green High School at its next meeting.

Decisions

1. To re-establish the Ofsted Subgroup for the 2018-19 municipal year and agree the terms of reference and work programme.
2. That Councillor Alijah be appointed as Chair of the Ofsted Subgroup and that Councillors Hewitson, T Judge, Lovecy and Stone and Ms Neall and Mr Lammas be appointed to the Subgroup.

3. To request that the Subgroup consider the Ofsted inspection report for Newall Green High School at its next meeting.

CYP/18/28 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.

The Chair noted that Committee Members would be discussing the work programme for the Committee at the rise of the Committee meeting.

Decision

To note the report.