

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 12 October 2022

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Abdullatif, Alijah, Amin, Bano, Gartside, Hewitson, Johnson, Lovecy and Sadler

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Co-opted Non-Voting Members:

Miss S Iltaf, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children Services

Councillor Foley, Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Councillor Shilton Godwin, Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Wright, Member of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

CYP/22/44 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2022.

CYP/22/45 Bee Green summit update and Education Green Climate Change Action Plan 2022-24

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which provided an update on work done by the Council to support the education sector with decarbonisation since the previous report to the Committee on the Climate Emergency in January 2022. It also outlined the plans for this work moving forwards, with the action plan refreshed bi-annually following on from several review points within the two years.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Background information;
- Progress to date in relation to:
 - Bee Green Education Summit;
 - Green Bee Assembly;
 - Schools Hub;
 - Education Services' Climate Change Action Plan 2022-24; and
 - Plan Launch and World Car Free Day; and

- Future opportunities.

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

- Plans to work with schools who had not engaged with the Bee Green event;
- School carbon emission figures and whether the Key Performance Indicators in the appendix should include a specific target for reducing carbon emissions;
- How the Council could help schools to focus on the climate change crisis, given the other pressures on schools, their pupils and families at the present time;
- Travel to school, including the safety of pupils walking and cycling to school;
- The role of Ward Councillors, including how they could engage with schools and sharing information with Ward Councillors about the work the schools in their wards were doing;
- To request that school governors be given carbon literacy training; and
- Recognising the important role of the Manchester Environmental Education Network.

The Director of Education advised that there were always competing priorities and challenges for schools but that the Council was committed to keeping this issue high on the agenda, making it a priority and supporting schools to do the same. She informed Members that an audit was taking place on the progress schools in Manchester had made so far in addressing climate change. She reported that some schools had already made a lot of progress with this while some were still at a very early stage with this work, not because they were unwilling to address it but because they did not know how to start to approach this. She reported that, following the audit, the Council would look to group schools together to provide support.

The Graduate Management Trainee reported that there was not currently a tool available to calculate school emissions but that work was taking place to look at how this could be achieved and to try to calculate energy use per pupil and that a clearer picture of emission levels was needed before setting targets. In response to Members' comments on rising energy bills and funding available to help schools reduce the amount of carbon produced by their heating systems, he informed Members about some of the funding which was available, that information on this was available on the online schools hub and that the Council could assist schools with applying for these funding streams. The Director of Education informed Members that information was being sent to schools the following week about how they could reduce their energy use. The Graduate Management Trainee reported that procurement was another area where schools could reduce their carbon emissions through working together to source sustainable, local providers. The Chair suggested that schools sign up to the Council's Ethical Procurement Policy and Social Value Policy.

In response to a Member's question, the Post-16 Lead outlined how the Council, schools and settings worked together to understand and respond to labour market intelligence on green skills and green jobs. In response to a Member's question about figures on the level of engagement with the online schools hub, he advised that he would look at what data was available on this. In response to a question about

ward-level work on climate change, he advised that he and his colleagues were working in conjunction with ward action plans and liaising with other teams, including Neighbourhood Teams, and the Highways Service, to ensure a joined-up approach. He informed Members that this included working together on a pilot project in relation to active travel. The Chair expressed concern that Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) had so far not been able to find funding for some sustainable travel projects.

The Executive Member for Children's Services highlighted that integrating the school action plans with the ward action plans was referred to in the action plan and he encouraged the Ward Councillors to ensure that this was taking place in their ward. He recognised the important role of Ward Councillors and advised that he would email all Councillors to encourage them to engage with schools on climate change and that he would arrange for Ward Councillors to have access to school action plans. He reported that carbon literacy training was available for school governors and that this would be made clear and that the Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport was working to increase the number of carbon literate people in schools. He confirmed that the Council was working with the Manchester Environmental Education Network.

The Graduate Management Trainee acknowledged a Member's comment about parental engagement, reporting that the Green Bee Relay referred to in the report would be a good way of initiating this.

The Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee welcomed the work outlined in the report, in particular the focus on children and young people's voices and giving them ways of taking action to address climate change. She advised that some actions to address climate change were more easily achieved than others and that this should be taken into account when prioritising actions. She highlighted a report by the Manchester Climate Change Partnership which was going to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee meeting the following day and which indicated that the city was failing to meet its targets on its journey to reach zero carbon by 2038. She reported that the age, design and condition of school buildings was a challenge and that schools would need a lot of support to address this. She encouraged the Council to be more ambitious than the targets set by the Department for Education (DfE) on rolling out carbon literacy training. She reported that she had attended the Bee Green event and asked whether it would be better to spend the money on trying to engage with the schools who were not currently engaged in this work.

Councillor Wright, Member of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee, stated that it would be useful to have a breakdown of the current position in relation to school buildings and which were likely to require more work to reduce carbon emissions and what access to funding was available. She asked to see the information that was on the schools hub in relation to climate change.

In response to a question from Councillor Wright, the Graduate Management Trainee clarified that the figure on the percentage of education emissions which came from travel and transport, included all school travel, relating to both pupils and staff. He proposed a travel survey to better understand how pupils were travelling to school and informed Members about the school streets toolkit which was being developed.

He reported that a task group was looking at installing solar panels on school buildings and overcoming the barriers that schools faced in doing this.

The Chair informed the Committee that she and the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee had been working with TfGM to ensure a more equitable provision of school buses across Greater Manchester by September 2023. She advised that a report would be brought to either this Committee or the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee once this work had been completed. She advised that this would have a significant impact on the number of car journeys by parents to take children to school. She also stated that it would be beneficial to have a RAG rating for schools, to monitor the progress they had made in relation to addressing climate change and support them to improve. The Post-16 Lead reported that this would be done through the audit process.

The Executive Member for Children's Services explained that the Bee Green summit had been a form of quality engagement which had informed the action plan and that it was the actions arising out of the summit that were important, rather than the event itself.

The Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport thanked the Director of Education, the Executive Member for Children's Services and all those involved for their work on this, which went beyond that which was outlined in the report. She advised that the information and resources on the schools hub was the legacy of the Bee Green summit and asked officers to provide a briefing to Members on this.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/22/46 Admission Policies for 2024/25 for community and voluntary controlled primary schools and community high schools

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which sought approval to commence consultation on revised admissions arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools and community high schools. The Committee was invited to comment on the report prior to its submission to the Executive on 19 October 2022.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Background;
- Main issues;
- The proposal to change the re-application process from three times per year to one and the benefits of this;
- Oversubscription criterion, which were not changing;
- Consultation; and
- Other admission authorities.

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

- To support the proposal that applicant details remained on the waiting lists for the higher preference school for the whole or remainder of that academic year, rather than parents having to re-apply each term;
- Families who had to move, sometimes more than once, due to domestic abuse and what was being done to support them in obtaining a suitable school place;
- The medical evidence required to be classed as Category 2 (children with exceptional medical/social needs) under the oversubscription criterion and costs associated with this;
- Children in a school nursery who were not successful at getting a place in the Reception year of the school;
- The importance of communication to parents on applying on time and putting more than one preference on the admissions form; and
- Travel to school and further education settings, including the financial costs for families, and the environmental costs.

The Head of Access and Sufficiency reported that, where families were placed in temporary accommodation, the Council worked to provide travel solutions to enable the children to continue to attend their existing school but, where this was not possible, they would look to provide a more local school place as quickly as possible and the process for this had recently been improved. She advised that parents were usually able to provide documents that they already had, such as letters about hospital appointments, as evidence that their child should be classed under Category 2 and, therefore, there was no additional cost to the family. In response to Members' questions, she reported that a high proportion of in-year applications were offered a place at one of their preferred schools but that this was more difficult at secondary level and that, as more secondary places were made available, this should improve. In response to a question about families re-applying for a preferred school, she reported that, once children had started attending at a school which was an alternative offer, most families chose for their child to continue at that school, rather than continuing to re-apply for the school they had originally preferred. She advised that there was currently more availability for primary school places but, if Members had concerns about particular primary schools where children from the school nursery were not getting a place in Reception, she could look into it to see if parents were applying after the deadline and whether more needed to be done with those nurseries to communicate the importance of submitting an application on time. The Director of Education clarified that attending a school nursery did not guarantee a place in the school's Reception year; however, there was now better sufficiency of places at Reception level and sometimes the reason for not getting a place was because parents thought they did not need to submit an application because their child already attended the nursery, or because they did not submit it on time, and all the places were allocated to families who had submitted the application on time. The Chair advised that nurseries could help to communicate this information to the parents.

The Committee discussed secondary school places, in particular in the north of the city, and a Member shared concerns about children who had not started secondary school because the school they had been offered was of a different faith from the family's. The Executive Member for Children's Services offered to discuss the

specific cases raised with the Member. He emphasised the importance of the Council and primary schools communicating strongly to parents about the importance of including more than one school preference on the admissions form. The Chair suggested that this issue be discussed with Ward Councillors in the north of the city as it was likely that other primary schools were aware of issues with parents not accepting the secondary school places that were offered. She expressed concern about children who were not in school, including those whose parents had chosen Elective Home Education (EHE) and asked for up-to-date figures on this, including a breakdown by areas of the city. The Director of Education reported that school attendance was improving and that her service was looking at children who had not returned to school. She stated that, where families had not got a place at their preferred school, they were advised to send the child to the offered school and that they could still try to obtain a place at their preferred school through the waiting list or an appeal, or look for another alternative school. A Member commented that some families would be concerned about the cost of buying a school uniform for their offered school if their child might later get a place at the preferred school.

Decisions

1. To support the proposal that applicant details remain on the waiting lists for the higher preference school for the whole or remainder of that academic year, rather than parents having to re-apply each term.
2. To note the formal consultation on changing the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools and community high schools will commence on 31 October 2022.
3. To ask that up-to-date figures on children who are not in school, including those whose parents have chosen Elective Home Education (EHE) be included in a future report and that this include a breakdown by areas of the city.

CYP/22/47 School Places

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education and the Head of Access and Sufficiency which provided an overview of Manchester's current school age population and the numbers forecast for future academic years. It also detailed work previously undertaken and that which was planned to achieve a sufficiency of school places. The Committee was invited to comment on the report prior to its submission to the Executive on 19 October 2022.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- The school age population;
- Approach to securing sufficient school places; and
- Actions to secure sufficient school places, including work to progress the establishment of a new secondary special school at a site identified in north Manchester.

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

- The impact of the growth of the city centre on inner city wards and the need to consider the sufficient provision of schools and medical facilities for the expanding population;
- Could the Department for Education (DfE) override the Council's proposals in relation to the new secondary special school; and
- Timescales in relation to Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

The Director of Education advised that her service was being included more in the planning related to residential developments and she highlighted that a city centre school was being built. She reported that the Council had involved the DfE when undertaking the Free School Presumption Process so that they were assured about the way the Council was carrying out the process. Therefore, she advised, it was less likely that they would overrule it and they had never overruled the Council on this previously.

The Head of Access and Sufficiency informed Members about the statutory 20-week process for EHCPs, advising that currently the Council was delivering about 80% of EHCP requests within this timeframe. She reported that the Council was working with schools to improve support to children before and during the time taken for the EHCP application process, with a focus on early intervention and support before the child had an EHCP in place.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Executive Member for Children's Services highlighted the demand for more school places in Wythenshawe, due to the closure of Newall Green High School, and that this was being addressed through the opening of a new school next year. Referring to the Newton Heath school, he reported that the need for an additional school in north Manchester had been identified some time ago and that the Council had worked very hard to identify a site for it. The Head of Access and Sufficiency reported that the Co-op Academy Belle Vue was already open in temporary accommodation with a reduced number of places and would offer the full number of places from next year. In response to a further question from the Chair, she advised that, once these new high schools were fully open, there should not be a need for any further new high schools, unless there were any long-term major residential developments in future, in which case her service would be involved in planning for this. In response to a question from the Chair about whether the new high school in Belle Vue could open up to other year groups, she advised that this was an option which could be considered.

In response to a question from the Chair about special schools, the Head of Access and Sufficiency drew Members' attention to the information in the table at 5.9 in the report which outlined what had been done to increase specialist provision in the city, as well as the proposed new special school. She reported that the vast majority of children attending the city's specialist provision were Manchester children.

The Chair advised that Ward Councillors needed to ensure that they were aware of developments in their area and the impact on infrastructure, including the need for sufficient schools.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/22/48 Update on the Independent Review of Children's Social Care

The Committee received a presentation of the Deputy Strategic Director for Children's Services which provided an update on the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

The main points and themes within the presentation included:

- A reset in children's social care;
- A revolution in family help;
- A just and decisive child protection system;
- Unlocking the potential of family networks;
- Transforming care;
- The care experience;
- Realising the potential of the workforce;
- A system that was relentlessly focused on children and families;
- Implementation; and
- Manchester's readiness.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Deputy Strategic Director for Children's Services advised that there were aspects of the report which he welcomed, in particular the call for investment in services, but that the Council was waiting for the details of the policy before being able to form a fuller view of it. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that the outcome of the Review was welcomed overall by the social work profession but that there were concerns about some of the proposals, which they would need to see the details of before forming an opinion, including the regional care consortiums and plans for the social work workforce. The Executive Member for Children's Services welcomed the discussion on reform and investment in children's services which this had raised but expressed concern about how the national government would respond to the call for investment and the impact of the current backlog of legislation waiting to go through parliament, as some elements of this would require additional legislation.

In response to a Member's question about the proposal for a windfall tax on profits in the children's social care market, the Deputy Strategic Director for Children's Services referred Members to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on children's homes and a recent article on the difference in Ofsted judgements between private providers and local authority providers; however, he advised that there were some very good private providers which the Council wanted to work with and he outlined how quality of care and value for money were monitored through commissioning arrangements and commissioning officers, social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers and Ofsted. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that the Council had significantly reduced the number of children who were Looked After and those who were in residential provision, which was the primary area where there was the issue of profiteering. He advised that next month's budget report would include the costs relating to individual children due to

the complexity and range of their needs. He reported that his service was not waiting for a response from the national government to make improvements and outlined work already taking place to continuously improve, working collaboratively with a range of partners within the city and across Greater Manchester.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/22/49 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 invited Members to contact her with any suggestions for the work programme and she suggested that the Committee might want to look at Multi-Systemic Therapy at a future meeting.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme, subject to the above comments.