

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 13 October 2023

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Alijah, Bell, Fletcher, Hewitson, Lovecy, Marsh, Muse, Nunney, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Co-opted Non-Voting Members:

Miss S Iltaf, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People
Councillor T Robinson, Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care

Nicky Boothroyd, MCRactive

Jeff Seneviratne, Chair of Manchester Outdoor Education Trust (MOET)

Apologies:

Councillors N Ali, Amin, Bano, Gartside, Judge, Ludford and McHale

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/23/40 Minutes

The Chair welcomed the new Committee Member, Councillor Marsh.

The Representative of the Diocese of Manchester informed the Committee of the issues that her Diocese was responding to in relation to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) within school buildings that it was responsible for.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2023.

CYP/23/41 Urgent Business - Joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to serious youth violence

At the request of the Chair, the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services provided the Committee with an overview of the JTAI taking place in Manchester. The inspection started on 25 September 2023 and was due to conclude with five days fieldwork activity and feedback to senior leaders on 13 October 2023. The inspection was led by Ofsted and involved a total of 12 inspectors from the CQC (Care Quality Commission), Ofsted (schools and social care), HMPI (HM Inspectorate of Probation) and HMICFRS (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire

& Rescue Services). In addition, the Violence Reduction Unit would be within scope as a key partner. Each inspectorate was engaged directly with their usual regulatory area, for example, the CQC reviewed NHS activity, data and records.

The scope of the inspection considered three broad areas.

- Strategic Partnership responses to serious youth violence (how well did we work together, understand and respond to issues in Manchester)
- Intervention with individual and groups of children affected by serious youth violence and criminal exploitation (how did we provide timely, purposeful and impact positively into children and their family's lives)
- Intervention in places and spaces (contextual safeguarding and how we used intelligence to inform activity and disrupt)

Ofsted was due to publish the letter on 30th November 2023 in respect of their findings, to which an action plan would be required in due course.

The Chair advised that the findings would be submitted to either the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee or the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee.

Decision

That the findings of the JTAI will be considered by the relevant scrutiny committee.

CYP/23/42 Sufficiency

The Committee considered a report and two presentations of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an update on the Our Children Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 27 and outlined Children's Services' response to the Supported Accommodation Regulations (March 2023) and the requirement to register all supported accommodation with Ofsted.

Key points and themes in the Sufficiency presentation included:

- Commissioning provision;
- Implementation timeline, including the launch of Mockingbird; and
- Internal service provision.

Key points and themes in the Supported Accommodation report and presentation included:

- Background information;
- Categories of registration;
- Demographics;
- Framework for inspection;
- Our provision; and
- Challenge/risk and service response.

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

- To welcome the positive work the Council was doing with its partners;
- To welcome work to ensure that Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children were in touch with local support networks;
- To welcome that young people had been involved in the decision-making in relation to this work;
- Identifying and supporting young people with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) or a neuro-behavioural problem;
- Young people waiting for a place in supported accommodation; and
- Support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people with no immigration status when they reached 18.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that FASD and other conditions could be identified through the Annual Health Assessment and he informed Members about work to increase the number of review health assessments and plans to develop a Health Profile, which could include the number of children with FASD. He also informed Members about the transition process, which included an assessment of young people's needs, and highlighted the use of dual registration accommodation, which was registered with both Ofsted and the CQC, and the focus on providing a stable home. In response to a Member's question, he advised that the aim was for children to grow up within their local community and that the Council had a performance measure for placing children within 20 miles of their home address, which the vast majority were.

In response to a Member's question about the outstanding activities on the project plan, the Assistant Director (Children in Care and Care Leavers) reported that a lot of work had been completed since the report had been published, while highlighting some of the activity which remained outstanding and the reasons for this, including some work which could not be completed until the Inspection Framework was published. She reported that young people who were waiting for a place in supported accommodation would remain in their current placement until a place became available for them. In response to a Member's question, she outlined how the Council worked with other local authorities through the Greater Manchester Care Leaver Board with the aim of ensuring that young people across Greater Manchester had the same experience, regardless of their home local authority, and that reciprocal arrangements were used to best support young people. In relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, she reported that the number of young people over the age of 18 without an immigration status had significantly reduced but there were concerns about the impact of the Illegal Migration Bill on this group and work was taking place to prepare for this.

The Chair welcomed the progress made since 2014 when Manchester's Children's Services was judged to be inadequate. She expressed concern that the Council and providers were having to prepare for the new regulations on supported accommodation when the full details had not yet published, advising that this was unfair and should be raised with Ofsted. She also expressed concern that the new regulations would place additional pressure on staff and could deter some people

from providing supported accommodation, particularly people providing supported accommodation in their own home.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People recognised the Chair's points about the risks and difficulties involved, including having to prepare for a new inspection regime without the full information, while advising that the Council was in a much stronger position to respond to these challenges than it had been previously. In response to a question from the Chair in relation to a specific case, he suggested that they discuss this further outside of the meeting. He highlighted that the Council had increased the allowance to young people by £20 to help them with the cost-of-living crisis.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that the National Association of Directors of Children's Services had raised some of the concerns discussed at the meeting in relation to the impact of the new regulations. He reported that guidance had been issued and that this was unlikely to change significantly so the Council was planning ahead on this basis. He advised that the capacity issues would fall mainly on the providers but that the inspections were likely to focus on the provider, rather than the provision, so would not necessarily involve visiting individual homes. In response to a question from the Chair, he informed Members about work to build capacity for Regulation 44 visitors, recognising the much more detailed reports which were now required.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/23/43 Ghyll Head Outdoor Education and Activity Centre Update

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on the capital works undertaken on site, set out the progress made since Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) stepped in with the operational management of Ghyll Head and provided context for the current operating environment.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Background information;
- Capital business case and implementation;
- Trading position and challenges; and
- Next steps.

The Committee was shown a video about the provision at Ghyll Head and the benefits for Manchester young people.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People highlighted the investment which had been made into Ghyll Head to make it sustainable for the future.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care, addressed the Committee as the Council's Elected Member Representative on the Strategic Advisory Group. He spoke positively about his own experiences at Ghyll Head. He informed Members about the work that had taken place over recent years, including the development of the Outdoor Education Strategy, and he thanked those involved. He highlighted the improvements in the infrastructure and the use of the space. He reported that workforce recruitment was still a challenge but that GLL, MCRactive and Council officers were working to find innovative solutions and that this was continuing to be closely monitored. He highlighted the financial challenges that schools were facing and the importance of working to source funding to help children from deprived wards to access Ghyll Head. He praised the work of the Heads of the Centre, MCRactive, Council officers and Manchester Outdoor Education Trust (MOET) and the positive partnership with GLL.

Jeff Seneviratne, Chair of MOET, reported that, when he had last attended the Committee four years ago, the future of Ghyll Head had looked uncertain but that, while there remained challenges, the decisions made to invest in the centre had secured its future. He welcomed the decision to involve MOET in the future of Ghyll Head and he highlighted the importance of ensuring that, rather than young people having a one-off trip to Ghyll Head, this should be part of a wider outdoor education. He outlined some of the work taking place to achieve this including developing resources in and near the city, including accessible facilities, and workforce development for teachers and youth workers to help them to build on what young people learnt at Ghyll Head.

Nicky Boothroyd from MCRactive informed the Committee that a research team at Sheffield Hallam University had been engaged to help develop a strategy focusing on participation and that work was also taking place to identify facilities within the city.

Members welcomed that Ghyll Head was a fantastic asset for the city and shared positive experiences of Ghyll Head and the benefits for children and young people.

In response to a Member's comments about leisure centres and digital exclusion, the Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets offered to discuss this with the Member outside of the meeting.

In response to a Member's comments, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that the partnership with GLL on Ghyll Head had worked well, with priority being given to Manchester children, while attracting other users to make it sustainable, and with the Strategic Board having oversight.

A Member who was a Teacher Representative commented on the financial pressures on schools, the challenge of finding funding to take pupils to Ghyll Head and whether some of the funding provided to schools could be specifically designated for this purpose. The Chair advised that individual schools had discretion over how they spent their own money and suggested the Member speak to senior leaders at the school. The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets reported that she wanted to work with schools to get more groups to Ghyll Head. She reported that funds such as Our Year Legacy Fund and the Our Year Social Fund had been used to help some groups to visit the centre and that discussions were taking place

about other funding which could be used in future to help subsidise visits to Ghyll Head, as well as looking at ways to reduce other associated costs, such as transport to the Lake District.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that a Strategic Education Plan was being developed for the city and that the Council wanted to include a pledge in this that all Manchester children would have the opportunity to attend a residential.

A Member welcomed that energy consumption at Ghyll Head had reduced by 14%, while use of the site had increased. In response to a question about other measures to reduce energy consumption, the Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets reported that further improvements to energy efficiency would be part of the next phase of the development of Ghyll Head. Nicky Boothroyd from MCRactive reported that solar panels had been considered as part of the refurbishment but, because Ghyll Head was within a national park, there were planning restrictions in place which would have made this difficult. She reported that the refurbishment had included additional insulation, LED lights and light sensors, that the centre now used gas and electricity rather than oil and that GLL used an energy monitoring system. She reported that, despite not being in Manchester, Ghyll Head was included in the Council's zero carbon target.

In response to a Member's questions about children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), Nicky Boothroyd from MCRactive reported that they worked closely with the Local Offer Board and highlighted some of the groups which used Ghyll Head. She advised that the club at Debdale was accessible, that a group of SEND children from the Youth Zone in Harpurhey also accessed the provision every month and that a new accessible boat had just been delivered.

The Chair highlighted how Ghyll Head was now very accessible. She reported that the centre was now used by families for edge of care provision, as well as by schools and was also available for commercial use. She spoke of the benefits of visiting Ghyll Head for children who had never been outside their area of Manchester.

Jeff Seneviratne, Chair of MOET encouraged all Councillors to join MOET. The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care agreed to circulate information on this.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/23/44 Youth, Play & Participation Service (YPPS) Commissioning Grants, Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme and Youth Investment Fund (YIF)

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on the outcome of the youth and play commissioning process. It also provided an update on the highlights from the HAF Programme, an overview of the Department of Culture, Media & Sport's (DCMS) YIF Programme and an update on Manchester's YIF capital programme.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Policy context;
- Decision-making processes for youth and play commissioning;
- Applications, funding awards and development;
- Quality assurance;
- Holiday Activities Fund (HAF); and
- Youth Investment Fund (Capital) Programme.

The Head of Libraries, Galleries, Culture and Youth, Play and Participation Services thanked officers for all their hard work in relation to these areas of work.

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

- The challenges in deciding who would be awarded funding because of the volume of applications and the limited funding available;
- Support for organisations which had not been successful in obtaining funding or had not been awarded the full amount of funding that they had asked for; and
- Issues with territory and young people not wanting to travel to different areas.

The Commissioning and Engagement Manager reported that positive meetings had taken place with organisations who had not been successful in obtaining funding and that these organisations had been offered support, including training opportunities, feedback on their application and, in some cases, smaller amounts of funding. He reported that the Council had offered help with finding alternative sources of funding and help with writing their applications, if needed. He acknowledged that there had been difficult decisions on awarding funding and that the vast majority of organisations had not received what they had asked for; however, he reported that there was a robust process in place for making the decisions, with decisions made based on the merit of the application and assessed against the agreed criteria, considering whether they were meeting the needs of local communities and in line with national and local strategies. In response to a further question, he advised Members that the additional £500,000 referred to in the report was to support groups and build their capacity, including training and development for their staff, such as youth work qualifications.

In response to a question from the Chair about coverage across different wards, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that the Council always wanted to improve in terms of having more provision and a more equitable coverage across the city; however, having brought the commissioning programme back in-house, the Council now had better knowledge of current provision, was monitoring it and would ensure that organisations were delivering to the areas they had said they would. In response to a Member's question about grassroots organisations, he reported that the Council could provide help and support to these groups and suggested that they could apply to the HAF Fund. He thanked those in the youth and play sector for their work.

The Commissioning and Engagement Manager reported that, while territory was still an issue, more young people were now willing to travel, and providers were being asked to work with young people to address this issue. He informed Members that the successful applicants had indicated that they would be working with young people across different wards and that monitoring would take place to ensure that this was happening. He informed the Committee about the quality assurance and monitoring processes, including the use of Young Ambassadors and Peer Reviewers. In response to a question from the Chair, he reported that most of the organisations which had been funded were providing both youth and play activities. In response to a question about outreach work, he confirmed that some organisations had been funded to provide outreach work, including work to address territorial issues and issues within specific areas.

The Chair emphasised the importance of monitoring that work was taking place, including at a ward level. She highlighted that some wards in north Manchester had a high number of homeless families placed in them and the need to address any gaps in provision.

Decision

To note the report.

[Councillor Lovecy declared a personal interest as a trustee of Trinity House Community Resource Centre.]

[Councillor Alijah declared a personal interest as the Chair of the Hideaway Youth Project.]

CYP/23/45 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 agree the work programme.