

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 17 July 2024

Present:

Councillor Gartside – in the Chair
Councillors N Ali, Amin, E Bell, Lovecy, Mandongwe, Muse, Nunney, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative
Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:

Councillor Reid, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People
Councillor Foley, Deputy Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport
Councillor Shilton Godwin, Chair of the Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Johnson, Ward Councillor for Woodhouse Park

Apologies:

Councillors Fletcher, Jafri and McHale
Ms S Davies, Parent Governor Representative

CYP/24/34 Appointment of Chair for the Meeting

As the position of Chair was vacant, the Committee Support Officer asked for nominations for a Member to chair the meeting. A Member nominated Councillor Gartside, which was seconded by another Member and agreed by the Committee.

Decision

To appoint Councillor Gartside as Chair for the meeting.

CYP/24/35 Progress update on the development of the Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the development of a new Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035. A project team and steering group was formed in late 2023 ahead of the phase 1 engagement being launched in early 2024. This report provided a summary of the approach to engagement, the overall phase 1 engagement reach and a summary of the findings that were most relevant to the work of the Committee.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, describing that the Our Manchester Strategy 2025 was the ten-year strategy for the city and the current Our Manchester Strategy was due to expire in 2025;

- That officers had completed the first phase of development for the next Our Manchester Strategy for 2025 to 2035; and
- Providing an update on the activity undertaken to date, a summary of the outputs from the first phase of the development for the new strategy, and a summary of the next steps.

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

- How the needs and perspectives of marginalised groups, including young people with disabilities and from minority groups, were being addressed through the Strategy;
- Whether safe travel to schools would be addressed through the Strategy;
- What mechanisms would be put in place to monitor and evaluate the progress of the Strategy, particularly its impact on children and young people;
- That the branding should be reviewed, including seeking residents' views, to ensure that it reflected the diversity of the city; and
- That response rates were low in some wards and how could engagement be increased.

In response to a Member's question about the data at 5.7 in the report, the Strategy and Economic Policy Manager advised that Wythenshawe had been identified by respondents as an area of importance to them and he offered to share a corrected version of this data. He reported that the Council had worked with a range of different groups, as outlined in appendix 2, to help them to reach children and young people with disabilities and from minority ethnic groups. He informed Members that targeted work had taken place to seek responses from groups which were under-represented in the responses to the universal engagement activity and outlined how a more detailed analysis was now taking place, breaking down the responses further, and considering the weighting given to responses. He reported that other data sources were also being used, such as information that had been gathered through the UNICEF Child Friendly City work. In response to a Member's question, he informed Members that the questions used in the engagement on the Our Manchester Strategy had been very broad, for example, asking what made the respondents proud of Manchester, to enable people to raise issues which were important to them, rather than leading them towards a set range of responses. In response to the Member's question about travel to school, he advised that improving public transport had been one of the strongest themes that had emerged from the engagement and he highlighted that the Strategy was for the city as a whole, not just for services delivered by the Council. He informed Members that this was an overarching Strategy which would set the overall vision for the city and that other specific strategies and programmes of work would flow from this.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People informed the Committee that enabling children to travel safely to school was a priority issue for her and that she would be working with the Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport and the Highways Service on this. She reported that the UNICEF Child Friendly City engagement activity was ongoing and that Members would be asked to visit schools in their ward to engage with children and young people. She

emphasised the importance of cultural capital and ensuring that children and young people were included in the city's cultural activities.

The Strategy and Economic Policy Manager reported that the State of the City report was used to monitor progress against the Strategy and that, as the new Strategy was developed, there would be an opportunity to consider changes to how its progress was monitored and evaluated. He acknowledged Members' feedback on the branding and informed the Committee about new designs which were being developed by the Communications Team. He reported that, benchmarked against other cities, the level of public engagement on the Strategy had been good and that it also compared well to other engagement work in Manchester. He acknowledged that response rates varied across different areas and groups and advised that work had been undertaken to address this. He reported that Ward Councillors had been involved at an early stage in identifying places in their ward to engage with local residents and he encouraged Members who had any suggestions for places or organisations within their ward to be involved in stage 2 of the consultation to contact any of the officers listed on the report with this information.

Decisions

1. To note the report and that a further report will be considered by the Committee later in the year.
2. That Members will support engagement within their wards in the next phase of the Our Manchester Strategy consultation and will work with the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People on engagement in relation to the Child Friendly City work.

[Councillor Mandongwe declared a personal interest as a trustee of the Dimobi Children's Disability Trust and Dimobi Women's Trust.]

CYP/24/36 Update: Education Climate Change Action Plan 2022-24

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided an update on work done by the Council to support the Education sector with decarbonisation since the previous update on this work, which was presented to the Committee in June 2023. It also outlined the plans for this work moving forwards at a time when both the citywide Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) and that of Education services were due for refreshment. This work had and would continue to play an important role in Manchester's bid to become a UNICEF child-friendly city.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Progress that had been made towards the completion of actions in relation to the 'four Cs':
 - Campus;
 - Culture;
 - Community; and
 - Curriculum

- Green Schools Festival; and
- Buildings.

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

- To welcome the initiatives outlined in the report, while acknowledging the competing pressures that schools were facing;
- The Council's partnership with Improveasy, who were delivering free energy efficiency upgrades for residential properties across the city;
- Support for other types of schools, including independent schools and supplementary schools;
- Members providing examples of work taking place in their ward or schools where they were a Governor;
- How was best practice being shared; and
- The importance of hedges around schools to protect children from air pollution.

The Chair of the Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee commended the work that had taken place and stated that the 'four Cs' approach was a useful way to break down the work. She advised that school buildings were an important part of the city's carbon emissions but that, with many school buildings being the responsibility of academy trusts, rather than the Council, this made it more challenging to take action; however, she welcomed the work on solar panels, which was referred to in the report. She asked for clarification on how progress was being measured and monitored. She emphasised the importance of changing the way children and young people travelled to school, including promoting active travel and focusing on the transition from primary to secondary school and highlighted the role of the Council in providing safe routes.

The Project Manager (Educational Climate Change) acknowledged the point about responsibility for school buildings, while advising that some multi-academy trusts had made significant progress on this work and that best practice was shared with other trusts. He reported that schools were now able to calculate their carbon footprint, which would provide a better means of monitoring progress than the previous approach. He outlined some of the approaches to increasing active travel to schools, including active travel maps, the Living Streets programme, the Green Bee Relay and a recruitment drive for more School Crossing Patrollers. He reported that the Improveasy information would be sent to schools in September and that it would be possible to report on how many referrals were made. In response to a Member's question, he provided an update on the carbon literacy training.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People informed the Committee about discussions which she and the Chair of the Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee were having with Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) on a fair distribution of school bus services across Greater Manchester. She advised that pupils could educate their parents on recycling. She expressed concern about the condition of school buildings, which she advised had not been satisfactorily addressed by the previous Government, and

stated that she would be writing to the new Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson on a range of issues.

The Deputy Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport thanked the Project Manager (Educational Climate Change) for his work and welcomed that Manchester was one of only two local authorities which had created such a role. She advised that the biggest barrier to this work, despite school leaders and staff wanting to support this work, was the other pressures that schools were under, and she stated that the Council should ask the Government for support to make this a priority for schools and provide the guidance and resources needed.

The Director of Education reported that the Council worked with independent schools and supplementary schools, which had access to resources such as the Schools Hub. In response to a question about School Crossing Patrols, she advised that they were employed by the Council and the staff were contracted to work 38 weeks per year based on Manchester's standard school term dates; however, some schools, particularly academies, had adopted different term dates. She advised that having hedges around school grounds was at the discretion of the individual school; however, she advised that a lot of schools had made good use of their outdoor space, using available grant funding.

The Project Manager (Educational Climate Change) informed Members about the new National Education Nature Park funding from the Department for Education (DfE) which 37 Manchester schools had received funding from so far and which could be used to provide green screening to protect children from air pollution. He reported that information on available funding was shared with schools and that help could be provided to individual schools with submitting a bid for funding. He informed the Committee about work the DfE was doing in relation to climate change action, including developing a resource hub, advising that his service had good relationships with the relevant people within the DfE and was consulting with them to ensure that the Council's approach complemented theirs. He reported that, when working on climate change action planning with a school, they focused on one topic at a time to make it manageable, noting the other pressures on schools, and tailored the approach for the school. He informed Members that best practice was shared through network meetings and through case studies on the Schools Hub. He acknowledged a Member's point about the importance of having buy-in from members of a school's senior leadership team.

Decision

To receive a further update at an appropriate time.

CYP/24/37 School Attendance Headline Outcomes (provisional) & Strategic Overview

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Education which provided a summary of the 2023-24 provisional school attendance data and the proposed changes to school attendance legislation as outlined in the revised Department for Education (DfE) guidance '*Working together to improve school attendance*' statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local

authorities. The report reviewed activity that had taken place over the course of the current academic year and provided an outline of the strategic approach for 2024/2025.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The national context;
- Attendance data overview in 2023/2024;
- Analysis of ward-level attendance data and targeted intervention;
- Statutory attendance processes and analysis;
- Targeting Support Meetings; and
- Strategic approach to school attendance in 2024-25.

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

- To request a breakdown of fixed penalty notices by ward for 2023/24 and a comparison with how many were issued in the previous year;
- To welcome the focus on children transitioning from primary to secondary school;
- The impact of the introduction of 'support first' expectations on the issuing of fixed penalty notices;
- Support for families and addressing barriers to attendance;
- Whether the figures included children who were not registered at a school; and
- The benefits of making pupils and families aware of the costs and the impact on the child's education of missing school.

The Assistant Director for Education informed the Committee that officers would include a ward breakdown of fixed penalty notices and a comparison to the previous year in the next report on attendance, when they would have the final data.

The Statutory Lead for Attendance clarified that the data only related to children who were registered at a school. He reported that in 2022/2023 approximately 75% of fixed penalty notices were due to holidays and 25% due to sporadic absence. He reported that, for 2023/24, while the overall number of fixed penalty notices was on-track to be similar to the previous year, the breakdown was approximately 87% and 13%, which was partly due to the number of holidays but also because his team had been providing challenge to schools who were issuing fixed penalty notices for sporadic absence to ensure that they were offering support to families first, such as Early Help, a parenting contract and breaking down in-school and outside of school barriers to attendance. The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer outlined the multi-disciplinary approach to supporting families and the increased universal offer the Council was providing to schools.

In response to a Member's request for a breakdown of attendance data by year group, the Statutory Lead for Attendance reported that this would be produced at the end of the school year and shared with Members.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People outlined the issues raised by children at a recent event, including the difference in holiday prices

between term-time and school holidays and about contact with a home country. She highlighted the ongoing impact of the pandemic on school attendance. She advised that the ward breakdown of attendance was affected by whether there were high schools or only primary schools within the ward. In response to a Member's question, she reported that she had invited all Councillors to today's meeting, which would have drawn their attention to the report, and that she would be holding meetings in relation to some wards to identify the specific attendance issues in those wards.

The Ward Councillor for Woodhouse Park asked about the data on children who were not registered at a school. She commented on the pressure that schools were under and asked whether there was any additional funding being made available to support the work on school attendance.

The Director of Education informed the Committee that schools had to notify the Council if they removed a child from their roll and that they could only do this for specified reasons. She outlined the groups of children who were not included in the attendance data. These included children who were on the Child Missing Education (CME) list, children who were being electively home educated and children who had been offered a school place which their parents had not accepted. She explained that the latter group was dealt with by the School Attendance Team and that there was a process which could result in a School Attendance Order being issued. She explained how school funding was calculated, based on pupil numbers, pupils who were eligible for the Pupil Premium and pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), and advised that schools had discretion on how to allocate their budget and there was no funding specifically allocated to improve attendance. She informed the Committee that the revised national guidance on school attendance placed additional burdens on local authorities and there was no additional funding being given to councils for this. She encouraged Members to promote school attendance through their role as Ward Councillors and through other roles such as School Governors.

Decision

To request a further report, to include how successful the back-to-school bus has been, feedback from the Biannual Attendance Conference and next steps.

CYP/24/38 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.