

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2021

This Scrutiny meeting was conducted via Zoom, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Present:

Councillor Stone – in the Chair
Councillors Abdullatif, Alijah, Cooley, Kilpatrick, Lovecy, Madeleine Monaghan, Reeves, Reid, Sadler and Wilson

Co-opted Voting Members:

Ms S Barnwell, Parent Governor Representative
Ms Z Derraz, Parent Governor Representative
Dr W Omara, Parent Governor Representative

Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Mr L Duffy, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children and Schools
Amanda Shah, Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit

Apologies:

Councillors Chohan, Hewitson and McHale
Ms J Fleet, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/21/11 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021.

CYP/21/12 COVID-19 Update Including the Wider Opening of Schools and Colleges

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which provided a further update on the impact of COVID on schools and settings in the city. It reported that schools and colleges were looking forward to welcoming back all of their children and young people and focused on the wider reopening of school and colleges from 8 March 2021 which was announced by the Prime Minister on 21 February 2021. The report gave a brief outline of the Government guidance in relation to wider opening and support for education recovery; information on how this was being implemented by schools and colleges and the support provided by the Local Authority.

The Director of Education provided the Committee with an update which included:

- The re-opening of primary schools to all pupils;
- The re-opening of secondary schools to all pupils, including testing of pupils for COVID-19;
- The rules of the wearing of face coverings in schools; and
- Education recovery.

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

- What steps were being taken to ensure that the buses children were using to travel to school were COVID-secure;
- To recognise the work of the Director of Education and her service, headteachers and school senior leadership teams in the way the re-opening of schools to all pupils had been managed;
- The positive impact on children of being able to return to school;
- Secondary and college students self-testing for COVID-19; and
- Education recovery.

The Director of Education reported that she had contacted Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and asked for written assurance of the measures in place to ensure the safety of children travelling to school by bus. She offered to share their response with the Chair, once she had received it, to which the Chair agreed, stating that he would share it with the rest of the Committee. She explained that, if a pupil self-tested at home as positive for COVID-19, they would have to self-isolate but also be given a PCR test through a testing centre before they would be classed as a positive case. She advised that she could circulate a table of information which explained what would happen following the test result, depending on the circumstances. In response to a Member's question, she explained that, after learning how to carry out the COVID-19 test at school, if a pupil still struggled to carry it out at home, schools could still provide on-site testing for these pupils. She confirmed that her service was monitoring the level of consent to testing at schools across the city and, in areas where it was low, working with schools, the Communications Team and Neighbourhood Teams to encourage parents and pupils to participate in the testing.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Education advised that part of education recovery could include summer schools and it was likely that individual schools would have discretion over this but that on site summer schools did not necessarily need to be run by school staff and other providers could be brought in.

In response to a Member's concerns that some schools were not putting in place the same level of safety measures for teaching assistants as they were for teachers, the Executive Member for Children and Schools advised that the Council had communicated clearly that all school staff should be given the same level of consideration and explained how the Council was working with trade unions and schools to address these issues.

Decision

To note that the Director of Education will share TfGM's response, once she has

received it.

CYP/21/13 School Governance Update

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which outlined the support and future planned developments that the Council would provide to assist with fostering effective school governance across the city including governor recruitment, governor training, development and resources.

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

- Governor recruitment;
- Diversity of those applying for Governor roles; and
- Governor support.

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

- To thank officers for their work and to thank the volunteers who took on roles as School Governors;
- To welcome that Governor recruitment was continuing during the pandemic, using virtual interviews, and that more Governors were being recruited from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and to ask what had been done differently which had resulted in more applications from these groups;
- Work to fill vacant Governor posts; and
- Request for ward level information on Governor vacancies to enable ward co-ordination work to assist with filling these vacancies.

The School Governance Lead advised that it was likely to be a range of factors which had resulted in an increase in applications from BAME communities, including increased prominence of the vacancies on the Manchester Jobs website, increased presence on social media, people working from home during lockdown, national campaigns and word of mouth in communities. She advised that her team would be monitoring this, looking at the application process in more detail and also looking at retention rates. She welcomed the opportunity to work with Members and stakeholders at a ward level to fill vacancies. In response to a Member's question, she outlined the plans to develop a focus group on how to improve recruitment of and support for Parent Governors. She also informed Members that her team supported Governors from maintained schools and academies and offered assistance with Governor recruitment to different types of schools.

Decision

To thank the School Governance Lead and all those involved in the recruitment of Governors for their work.

CYP/21/14 Responding to the Needs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and the Children of Manchester who are Affected by the European Union Settled Status Scheme

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which summarised the offer and outcomes being achieved in relation to Our Children (Looked After Children) who were affected by European Union Settled Status (EUSS), Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and all children in care who were not British Nationals.

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

- Health needs of UASC;
- Education of UASC;
- Managing risk;
- Accommodation for UASC;
- Leaving care;
- European Union Settled Status (EUSS) Scheme; and
- Our Children who were not British Nationals.

Amanda Shah from the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU) welcomed the pledge that the Council had made 2020 to all children in care and care leavers in Manchester affected by Brexit immigration changes and the work which had taken place to support these young people, which she advised had provided a positive model for other local authorities. She emphasised the need to support young people who did not meet the deadline for the EUSS Scheme in June 2021 and would be in the UK illegally from 1 July 2021. She highlighted the section in her report, appended to the main report, which suggested the following update to the pledge:

'To our children in care and care leavers, learning from our support to children and young people affected by Brexit immigration changes, we will:

- *Identify all our looked after children and care leavers with insecure immigration status*
- *Commission legal advice so they can be supported to make the most appropriate immigration applications and challenge immigration refusals*
- *Support those who are eligible to apply for British citizenship*
- *Continue to provide access to leaving care services'*

The Executive Member for Children and Schools thanked Ms Shah and Council officers for their work. He emphasised the need to prioritise young people who had been refused settled status. He supported the proposed updated pledge and embedding thinking about immigration status in permanence planning for young people.

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

- Support for the proposed update to the pledge;

- Concern for the children who did not meet the deadline for the EUSS Scheme and to welcome the work to support them;
- That Members should campaign on this issue;
- Waiting times for Home Office decisions on young people's immigration status;
- Reasons for young people's immigration applications being declined;
- To note the important role foster carers were playing in supporting these children and young people; and
- How Ward Councillors could find out about cases in their ward and intervene to support young people's immigration cases.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services advised that there were confidentiality issues in sharing personal information about young people with Ward Councillors but that young people could be made aware of Ward Councillors as a source of advocacy support.

Amanda Shah explained that a lot of the delays in relation to the EUSS Scheme were in getting to the point of submitting an application because the way it was set up made it difficult for children with disrupted life histories, and this was exacerbated by the pandemic. She advised that young people could be rejected on the grounds of eligibility or suitability, the latter relating to youth offending. She informed the Committee that the GMIAU was about to produce a report on the situation for UASC in Manchester and the delays in decisions on their cases due to the pandemic. She welcomed that it appeared that a move to remote interviewing for their asylum claims would be taking place as she advised that delays for these young people had had a serious negative effect on them, particularly on their mental health. In response to a Member's question, the Service Lead outlined how mental health support was provided to young people supported by her service, in partnership with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). She also outlined how young people were supported through life story work, work to enable them to get a basic understanding of the legal process and structures in place in the UK and help to find family members around the world.

Decisions

1. To support the updated pledge outlined in the appendix to the report.
2. To note that Members of the Committee will campaign for the interests of these young people, supporting them through both their Council work and their political work.

CYP/21/15 Lyndene - Re-modelling and Next Steps

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an overview of plans for Lyndene Children's Home to be repurposed to provide outreach help and support alongside a short break package; thus enabling children and young people to remain within or move back to their family environments (parents or foster care) as well as providing close family support during this time.

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

- Proposed funding model;
- Needs of children and their families/carers;
- Service model;
- Proposed timeline; and
- Progress.

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

- Governance arrangements, including the importance of families being part of the governance structure and how Councillors could be involved;
- The challenges for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) transitioning to adult services and plans to support this group; and
- Would Lyndene be subject to Regulation 44 visits.

In response to a Member's question on placement figures, the Executive Member for Children and Schools advised that the Corporate Parenting Panel received regular reports on this but that updates on this could be provided to a future meeting of this Committee, to which the Chair agreed.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services informed the Committee that children and young people and their families had been involved in the design of this service and that the Council was committed to them continuing to have a voice in the running of the service. He advised that the service would be subject to regular scrutiny, including political scrutiny through this Committee scrutinising the service's effectiveness. He informed Members that his service was working with adult services to improve transitions and recognised that planning for children and young people should not end at a certain age and that planning should include considerations about transition to services for adults. He suggested that the Committee might want to consider a report on the work to improve transitions for young people who would continue to require support into adulthood at a future meeting.

The Strategic Commissioning Lead (Children's Services) informed the Committee that work was taking place to commission accommodation for young people aged 17 and over to support their transition to adult services. She reported that a listening workshop was also being held to understand some of the issues that arose with the transition to adult services.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services advised that the provision at Lyndene would be registered with and regulated through Ofsted and would receive Regulation 44 visits. He reported that his service would be recruiting Regulation 44 visitors, including Councillors, to carry out this role. He advised that Lyndene was part of the Council's SEND Offer and its performance would also be monitored through the SEND Board.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Education confirmed that there had previously been proposals for a similar provision at the Grange School's site but

that there had been a number of challenges regarding this, in particular registering the site to provide that offer when it was also a school, and that the space was now being well used as a sixth form provision for the Grange, which included training in living independently.

A Member who was on the panel for the Lyndene Project, as a member of the Manchester Parent Carer Forum, reported that parents of children with SEND felt strongly that they wanted their children to be supported within the city, in preference to a residential placement outside of Manchester. She advised that the work on Lyndene had been a co-production, involving parents, and that, as long as families continued to be involved in this way, this project would continue to move in the right direction. She thanked the Strategic Commissioning Lead and her team for their work.

Decisions

1. To request that figures on placements for Our Children be included in a future report.
2. To receive a further report on Lyndene in 12 months' time.

[Ms Barnwell declared a personal interest as she was on the panel for the Lyndene Project, as a member of the Manchester Parent Carer Forum.]

CYP/21/16 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.

In response to a Member's question about the music service at One Education, the Executive Member for Children and Schools advised that discussions were taken place between the Council, trade unions and One Education about this. The Chair requested to be kept informed of this. A Member requested that the Committee receive a report about One Education. The Chair advised that the Committee had previously received a report on One Education and that he would discuss the timing of a future report on One Education after the meeting.

The Chair informed the Committee that this was his last meeting and thanked officers, Committee Members and the Executive Member for Children and Schools for their work, as well as the teachers, headteachers and children of Manchester. Members thanked Councillor Stone for his contribution to the Committee over many years and the way he had chaired the Committee over the previous three years. The Chair also thanked Councillor Madeleine Monaghan for her work, as this was also her last meeting. Councillor Monaghan thanked the Committee for their passion and commitment to the children and young people of Manchester.

Decision

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