

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2021

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Abdullatif, Bano, Hewitson, Lovecy and Nunney

Co-opted Voting Members:

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's Services

Councillor Cooley, Ward Councillor for Brooklands

Councillor Foley, Ward Councillor for Didsbury East

Apologies:

Councillors Alijah and McHale

CYP/21/24 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2021.

CYP/21/25 Update on impact of COVID-19 on children and families with a focus on family poverty

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which reported on the impact and consequence management of COVID-19 on children and their families. The report had a particular focus on family poverty and the impact of the pandemic on this. The report outlined the work that had been put in place to try to mitigate this, particularly in relation to the provision of food.

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

- Responding to COVID-19 cases;
- School attendance;
- Family poverty and the impact of the pandemic;
- Supermarket vouchers for children/young people;
- Welfare payments; and
- Holiday activity and food scheme.

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

- Concern that rising infection levels were resulting in increased disruption to children's education, the challenges this created for head teachers and teachers and what could be done to limit the number of pupils being instructed to self-isolate;
- Whether any Manchester schools were involved in the trial involving daily testing of close contacts;
- That when Ofsted undertook inspections it should be made clear to them the disproportionate effect that the pandemic had had on Manchester's schools and could a breakdown of communities whose attendance had most been affected by COVID-19 be produced to assist schools with this;
- Families travelling abroad over the summer holidays who could be required to self-isolate on their return to the UK;
- How were equality, diversity and inclusion being embedded in the revised Family Poverty Strategy; and
- How the grant funding of £3,827,200 for Holiday Activities and Food was being used.

The Director of Education informed the Committee that two Manchester schools were involved in the trial where pupils who were a close contact of a positive case came into school and had a lateral flow test on site each day. She reported that all schools were receiving regular updates and had a point of contact within the Schools Quality Assurance Team for support and guidance. She reported that schools also received support from the Council's Public Health Team and that her service was working closely with Public Health. She acknowledged that the number of pupils being required to self-isolate when there was a positive case varied between schools and advised that this was dependent on the size of the bubble, how schools defined a bubble and to what extent contact was recorded, for example, whether a record was made about who pupils had sat with at lunchtime, commenting that many schools had become good at identifying which specific children had had close contact with the pupil who had tested positive. She reported that the other actions that schools could take were promoting the importance of vaccinations in the community and increasing testing, advising that work was currently taking place around on-site testing in secondary schools and mobile testing units. In response to a question from the Chair, she advised that colleagues in Bolton had told her that on-site testing in schools had made a big difference in improving the situation there. She asked Members to encourage people in their wards to give consent for this testing.

The Director of Education agreed with the Member's comment about Ofsted inspections, stating that schools were being reminded that they could defer their next Ofsted inspection and that many had good grounds for doing so. She advised that it would be possible to produce data on the impact of COVID-19 on school attendance, broken down by different communities. In response to a Member's question, she reported that schools were required to provide remote learning for pupils who were self-isolating but that this did not have to be online learning. She advised that she expected that the government would issue guidance on how to record absence after the summer holidays due to a requirement to self-isolate after returning from abroad.

The Director of Inclusive Growth advised that the work to respond to the impact of the pandemic had resulted in better intelligence on inequalities between different

communities and different parts of the city and that this was being reflected in the delivery of the Family Poverty Strategy and in the delivery of other strategies, for example, economic recovery work. In response to another Member's question, she advised that 40 organisations had been involved in the Community Food Partnership and that the Trussell Trust was a valued member of this food response work.

The Head of Youth Strategy and Engagement outlined how the Council was working with partners to use the Holiday Activities and Food funding and match funding to support young people. She advised that discussions were taking place with businesses about how this work could be sustained into next year, if the funding ended in March 2022. She noted that the Committee was due to receive a report on this programme of activity at its July meeting. The Chair advised that it was important that ward-specific information be shared with Ward Councillors through Ward Co-ordination meetings.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/21/26 The Lodge - Foyer Model Accommodation

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director for Children and Education Services which outlined proposals for the development of a property into foyer model accommodation for up to 30 young people, as part of the Council's commitment to working closely with housing providers and partners to ensure that all care leavers had access to sustainable and affordable accommodation to meet their needs.

The Committee was invited to comment on the report prior to its consideration by the Executive on 30 June 2021.

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

- Proposed accommodation model;
- Mosscaire St Vincents Pledge and Social Value offer;
- Financial implications;
- Need;
- Procurement; and
- Next steps.

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

- To welcome the proposals set out in the report;
- Positive experiences of Mosscaire St Vincents;
- Concern that accommodation for vulnerable young people could attract anti-social behaviour and child sexual exploitation and how this could be avoided;
- That the report stated that there was a good evidence base for foyer models of accommodation and could this evidence be shared with Members of the Committee;
- The importance of having positive stories about this to reduce the stigma that

young people living in Children's Homes or accommodation for Care Leavers could face; and

- How young people who had been placed out of area were made aware of the options for them when they left care.

In response to the concerns about the accommodation attracting anti-social behaviour and people wanting to exploit the young people, the Strategic Director for Children and Education Services outlined how young people's resilience was built up through the care system, through which they developed relationships with trusted professionals, and the preparations for young people leaving care, putting in place plans, working with the young people to ensure they were ready and providing more intensive support where this was needed. He also highlighted the role of the community, Neighbourhood Teams, the Complex Safeguarding Hub and Adult Social Care in addressing any issues that arose around the accommodation, including young people being at risk from sexual and criminal exploitation. He agreed to share with Members evidence that the foyers models of accommodation had been successful elsewhere. He reported that the Chief Executive of Mosscares St Vincents had been working with Greater Manchester Strategic Housing Providers to provide a broader offer of support to young people who were care experienced, including work experience and practical help. He advised that all our young people were prepared for leaving care, with suitable accommodation being identified from a range of different options and support for their transition to independence based on their needs.

Decisions

1. To endorse the recommendations to the Executive to:
 - (1) Comment on the report.
 - (2) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director – Children and Education Services, in consultation with the Executive Members for Children and Education to commission foyers model of accommodation for up to 30 children looked after, delivered by Mosscares St Vincents
 - (3) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director – Children and Education Services, in consultation with the City Solicitor to negotiate and formalise a ten year agreement with Mosscares St Vincent, with associated contract clauses to the annual value of £731,500 per annum.
2. To note that the Strategic Director for Children and Education Services will share evidence of the success of foyers models of accommodation with Committee Members.

CYP/21/27 Early Years – Tendered Day-care settings

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director for Children and Education Services which outlined a set of proposals to support the continued provision of high quality Early Years settings across the City. The report specifically provided an

overview of the impact of the current Early Years tendered day-care model (whereby providers offer day-care from a Council owned building), on the Council's duty to oversee sufficient day-care for preschool children across Manchester; the Early Years Budget and ongoing maintenance of Early Years buildings which remained part of the corporate estate.

The Committee was invited to comment on the report prior to its consideration by the Executive on 30 June 2021.

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

- Results of stock condition surveys;
- Review of Early Years buildings within the portfolio;
- Financial implications (revenue and capital);
- Further actions; and
- Support provided to Early Years settings during the pandemic.

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

- Whether the risk to tendered daycare settings referred to in the report stemmed from the pandemic or longer term issues;
- Concern about babies and young children not accessing Early Years provision either due to the pandemic or due to the rules on who was entitled to free daycare provision;
- Concerns about some private daycare providers, including the buildings used; and
- The proposal relating to Moss Side Sure Start Centre and Martenscroft Nursery School.

The Team Manager (Access and Sufficiency) advised the Committee that this issue pre-dated the pandemic and that there had been a high turnover of leases coming back to the Council since 2015. She reported that the Council had been monitoring the situation since then and had been concerned by some of the feedback that its daycare partners had been sharing about the difficulties they were facing in providing high quality, sustainable childcare. She also reported that re-tendering some of the sites had been challenging. She advised that the report reflected this evaluation and proposals for a new approach with daycare partners. The Strategic Director for Children and Education Services advised that the world had changed since the contracts were first set up and that the Council needed to listen to providers and respond to their issues to ensure that Manchester continued to have a range of daycare options across the city.

The Chair suggested that the Committee consider a wider item on Early Years at a future meeting, covering the full range of daycare provision. The Strategic Director for Children and Education Services suggested that this could also include the work of the Start Well Board. The Executive Member for Children's Services suggested that the Committee could also look at Think Family. The Chair proposed that the Ofsted Subgroup could visit some nurseries.

The Strategic Director for Children and Education Services informed Members that 97% of Early Years providers in Manchester had been judged as good or better by Ofsted and that Ofsted took into account the condition of the building. He advised that, if the Member had concerns about any provision in her ward, his service could check their Ofsted registration. The Team Manager (Access and Sufficiency) informed Members that daycare settings had access to support from the Council's Early Years Quality Assurance team, including forums and information-sharing. She acknowledged that families could find the funding arrangements for daycare provision complicated and advised that the Council used a range of means to communicate this information to families.

The Director of Education clarified that there were no proposed changes to Martenscroft Nursery School and that the proposed changes related to Moss Side Sure Start Centre, which Martenscroft was managing. She advised that the current building where the Sure Start Centre was located required significant investment so it was proposed to move the provision to St Mary's CE Primary School, while retaining its link to Martenscroft. The Chair advised that it was important that any changes were discussed at Ward Co-ordination meetings so that local Councillors were aware of what was happening. The Executive Member for Children's Services assured Members that he had contacted all the Moss Side Ward Councillors about this.

Decisions

1. To consider a wider report on Early Years at a future meeting.
2. To endorse the recommendations that the Executive:
 - 1.0 Note 17 of 37 leases have been surrendered since December 2015 and the potential impact on the council's ability to meet its 'sufficiency duty'.
 - 2.0 Note the continued negative budget implications on the Early Years budget which continues even if the status quo is maintained.
 - 3.0 Approve the recommendation for the use of each building moving forward.
 - 4.0 Approve the re-negotiation of the current leases by corporate estates with day care providers, making clear the responsibility of the lease holder and the corporate landlord in the re-negotiated lease.
 - 5.0 Support the proposal to include the Early Years estate portfolio in the Council's future Asset Management Programme, at an estimated cost of £0.7m per year.
 - 6.0 Approve a budget increase of £3m, funded by capital receipts, to fund the priority works.

CYP/21/28 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 current work programme for the Ofsted Subgroup. The Committee was asked to re-establish the Ofsted Subgroup for the municipal year 2021 - 2022 and agree the terms of reference, work programme and membership of the Subgroup.

Decisions

1. To re-establish the Ofsted Subgroup for the 2021 - 2022 municipal year and agree the terms of reference and work programme.
2. That Councillor Lovecy be appointed as Chair of the Ofsted Subgroup and that Councillors Bano, Hewitson, Foley, Nunney and Reid be appointed to the Subgroup.
3. That meetings are likely to take place on Wednesday mornings at 10 am.

CYP/21/29 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.

A Member suggested that the Committee look at climate change issues which related to its remit. The Chair advised that she would be speaking to the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee about Climate Change and Schools and suggested that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee could look at pollution around schools.

Another Member suggested that the Committee look at the implementation of the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum in schools when it became compulsory. She also suggested that the Committee look at policing in schools. The Chair advised that Youth Justice was within the remit of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee but that there could be some aspects which would be relevant to bring to her Committee. Another Member requested that the Committee look at Alternative Provision.

In response to a Member's suggestion that the Committee look at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the Strategic Director for Children and Education Services reported that the Director of CAMHS had attended the Committee's May meeting and he suggested that the Committee might want to look at the roll-out of the Mental Health in Schools Programme and the Thrive Hubs. The Chair suggested that mental health in schools could be the focus of a future report.

The Chair reported that the Scrutiny Support Officer had a list of all the items suggested at the work programming session in May and that Members could also contact her with any other issues that they wanted the Committee to look at.

Decision

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