

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair
Councillors Bano, Collins, Cooley, Foley, Hewitson, Lovecy, McHale and Nunney

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's Services

Apologies:

Councillors Abdullatif and Benham
Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative
Dr W Omara, Parent Governor Representative

CYP/22/14 Ukraine

The Chair expressed concern for the children affected by the invasion of Ukraine, including the families trying to flee the country. In response to a Member's question about what was being done to help children in this country to understand the situation and to allay their worries, the Director of Education advised that the BBC had created some Newsround clips to explain the situation, that the Healthy Schools Team had put together some information which was being circulated to schools for them to use and that this would be kept under review.

CYP/22/15 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2022.

CYP/22/16 Special Educational Needs and Disability Local Area Inspection

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which highlighted the main areas of strength and areas for development identified in the joint inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to judge how effectively Manchester had implemented the special educational needs and disability reforms introduced in 2014.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- The inspection process;
- The outcomes of the inspection; and
- The letter from Ofsted and the CQC, which was appended to the report.

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

- To welcome the positive outcome of the inspection and to thank those involved for their hard work;
- Were any of the identified areas for development unexpected and did the Council have the resources to accelerate work to improve the identified areas;
- Home school transport, including travel training for children and young people; and
- The importance of early identification of SEND.

The Director of Education advised that there were no surprises within the letter from Ofsted and the CQC but that it was disappointing that one of the areas highlighted had been that the local offer was not understood by all parents. She reported that a lot of work had been done to communicate the local offer to parents through a range of means, which Ofsted had acknowledged, and sometimes parents were not aware that the information they had found online was from the local offer website, which could have affected the way they answered the question that Ofsted had put to them; however, she acknowledged that the website could be improved and that the service would look at this. She advised that addressing the areas for development was mainly about improving communication and improving efficiency and effectiveness in areas such as home school transport rather than requiring more resources. The SEND Lead explained that travel training was part of the home school transport offer and included enabling young people to travel to college and work-based learning and travel for fun and leisure. She informed Members of plans to expand the number of people who were skilled and qualified to provide travel training.

In response to a Member's question regarding school places, the Director of Education advised that the aim was that children would be able to go to their local school, whether mainstream or special, and that the move to more generic special school provision would support this; however, she advised that sometimes places were not available in the right place at the right time and, where a child with SEND was placed at a school further away, the Council would provide home school transport arrangements. She highlighted the recent investment in increasing special school places, the new primary special free school in Blackley and the expansion of existing special schools and advised that this was an ongoing piece of work. She also highlighted the excellent work of many mainstream schools in the city, which enabled children with SEND to thrive in the mainstream sector. The Chair recognised the positive impact that being supported in mainstream schools had had on many children and young people, including those with moderate learning disabilities.

The SEND Lead informed Members about the SEND Early Years Pathway, which involved a range of professionals and teams, including different types of early years settings, working on early intervention of SEND. She reported that the percentage of children receiving health visitor checks at 9 months and two years was higher in Manchester than the national average and that these figures were monitored; however, she recognised the impact that the pandemic had had on early identification, as fewer parents had been engaging with services or sending their

children to early years settings. The Chair expressed concern about the impact of the pandemic on babies and young children. She advised that the Committee would look at health visiting at a future meeting.

Decision

To consider health visiting at a future meeting.

CYP/22/17 Manchester Sensory Support Service Commission

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which outlined a proposal to commission a provider through an open tender process to run the Manchester Sensory Support Service. The report covered the statutory requirements for the sensory service, the governance arrangements explored and recommended an option for the future provision of the Sensory Support Service in order to deliver an outstanding service and improve outcomes for children and young people with sensory impairment. The budget for this service was £2.83 million and there were no plans to reduce this budget as part of the proposals outlined in this report. The Committee was invited to comment on the proposal prior to its submission to the Executive on 16 March 2022.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- The national and local context;
- Options considered for the future governance of the Sensory Support Service;
- Factors that needed to be considered in the specification for a new managing organisation;
- Performance indicators and reporting requirements; and
- The proposal.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Director of Education advised that having the service based within an education setting had worked well but that it had put a high demand on Lancasterian School's governing body so new governance arrangements were needed; however, she emphasised that there were no plans to reduce the budget for the service nor to significantly change the service. In response to a further question about feedback from within the Sensory Support Service, the Assistant Director of Education advised that the service had submitted a number of questions, which had been responded to, and that, if the proposal was approved, there would be a formal consultation period. She drew Members' attention to the timeline set out in the report.

Decisions

1. To receive an update report at a future meeting.
2. To endorse the recommendations that the Executive:
 - (i) Approves progressing option 3 within a budget envelope of £2.83m per annum.

(ii) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Children and Education to do all things necessary to conduct the procurement exercise and award the contract for the service in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive, City Treasurer.

(iii) Authorises the City Solicitor to enter all necessary documentation to give effect to the recommendations and details set out in the report.

CYP/22/18 COVID-19 Update

The Committee received a verbal update from the Education Business Partner which outlined new developments and significant changes to the current situation, particularly in relation to schools.

The main points and themes within the verbal update included:

- The number of positive cases in schools, noting that these were reducing;
- That schools were still being asked to report positive cases to the Manchester Test and Trace team and that the team was continuing to support schools;
- Changes to restrictions including the removal of the requirement for face coverings and regular testing;
- That, while the legal requirement to self-isolate had been removed, government guidance still advised self-isolation for those who tested positive and self-isolation and testing for those with symptoms;
- School leaders' concerns that some parents would want to send children with symptoms or who had tested positive to school; and
- Ongoing communication and support for schools and communication with parents, emphasising the importance of keeping children at home in the above circumstances.

A Member commented that some children could be badly affected by COVID-19, including Long Covid, and that it was important to communicate to parents that COVID-19 had not gone away and that people needed to continue to be careful. The Education Business Partner advised that the task group meetings on COVID-19, at a Manchester and Greater Manchester level, were continuing and that Long Covid would be a focus. She reported that the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to schools included advice on staff with Long Covid.

The Chair advised that the standing item on COVID-19 should remain on the agenda and that vaccinations should be looked at again under this item at a future meeting. She highlighted the forthcoming examinations and the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health.

Decision

That this will continue to be a standing item on the agenda and that the vaccination of children and young people will be looked at under this item at a future meeting.

CYP/22/19 Children and Young People Participation and Engagement Plan

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an update on the current plans for children and young people's engagement and participation. This report included updates from targeted and universal services, aligned to the ambitions set out in the Our City, Our Say Strategy. The report also outlined the plans for a refresh of the participation and engagement strategy, in response to the global pandemic, new investment from the City Council and national funds and the declaration of the Climate Change Emergency.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Targeted offer;
- Universal offer; and
- Next steps.

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

- To recognise the importance of the voices of children and young people being heard and to thank all the officers working to ensure that this happened;
- To congratulate Manchester Youth Council on winning a Youth Focus North West award for their commitment to saving the planet;
- To request an update on the Youth Violence research and strategy;
- To request an update on work on climate change in relation to young people and schools; and
- Capturing the voices of young people in the Youth Justice System, noting that the Committee would be carrying out visits to Wetherby Young Offenders Institute and Barton Moss Secure Children's Home;

A Co-opted Member who was a Teacher at Abraham Moss Community School highlighted the role that schools could play in this work, including through School Councils and working in partnership with other schools, and stated that she would welcome the Council's involvement in facilitating this. A Member shared her positive experience of meeting pupils from Abraham Moss and their enthusiasm for the engagement work that was taking place. The Head of Youth, Play and Participation agreed that more should be done with schools and advised that this was a priority area and that he would contact the Co-opted Member outside of the meeting in relation to this.

The Executive Member for Children's Services informed Members that briefings would be held for Elected Members in advance of the drafting of the serious violence strategy. The Head of Youth, Play and Participation reported that his service was committed to being actively involved in the work on the strategy on youth violence. He advised that an update on the work on climate change could be provided at a future meeting. The Director of Education reported that the climate change conference planned for June was being co-produced with young people with workshops co-delivered by them.

The Head of Service for Youth Justice advised that his service used a range of methods to capture the views, ideas and experiences of young people, including topical research and narrative interviewing techniques. He informed the Committee about work with Manchester Metropolitan University researching the criminal justice system during lockdown, work which young people were actively involved in. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services highlighted examples of how young people were involved in shaping services and influencing decision-making. The Chair advised that visits undertaken by the Committee should focus on the voice of children and young people.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/22/20 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.