

# **Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee**

## **Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2022**

### **Present:**

Councillor Hitchen - In the Chair

Councillors Azra Ali, Benham, Chambers, Connolly, M Dar, Evans, Iqbal, Johnson, H Priest, Ogunbambo, Rawson, Sheikh, Whiston, Wills and Wilson

### **Also present:**

Councillor Midgley, Deputy Leader

Councillor Rahman, Statutory Deputy Leader

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure

Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Councillor Simcock, Chair of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Karney, Lead Member for the City Centre

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

Baroness Bev Hughes, Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester

Chief Superintendent Richard Timson, Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

### **Apologies:**

Councillor Hilal

## **CESC/22/42            Minutes**

### **Decision**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022 as a correct record.

## **CESC/22/43            Crime and Policing**

The Committee considered the report of the Police, Crime and Fire team, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) which was a highlight report of crime and policing issues for discussion with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Lifting GMP out of special measures;
- Resources;
- Progress with IT systems;
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods;
- Operation Vulcan in Cheetham Hill and Strangeways;
- Roads policing and safe travel;
- Violence reduction and county lines; and
- Equality and diversity.

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, outlined the journey of change that GMP had been through, leading to His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) taking GMP out of special measures recently, and the speed with which this improvement had been achieved. He highlighted the progress made across a range of areas including handling of calls from the public, time taken to respond to incidents, the quality of the response and an increase in prosecutions. He also highlighted that there had been an increased use of stop and search powers while also having a reduction in the number of complaints. He reported that a significant amount of the frontline officer posts that had been lost due to austerity had been restored and highlighted further funding from the Home Office for police officer recruitment, advising that increasingly people wanted to join GMP. He emphasised the importance of making roads policing a priority. He highlighted Operation Vulcan, which had been launched the previous week, and Operation Avro, which he advised was visible, positive policing which made an impact in communities and increased their confidence in GMP; however, he recognised that still much more needed to be done and also that, while it was not the subject of today's meeting, there were major learnings to be taken from the Manchester Arena Inquiry report.

Baroness Bev Hughes, Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester outlined how GMP had been able to make the progress it had made so far and how it would continue to do so. She informed Members that those involved in the recruitment of the new Chief Constable had been very clear about the criteria they were looking for, including a genuine commitment to a public service ethos, the ability to build leadership capability in GMP and transparency and willingness to work in partnership and she outlined how Chief Constable Stephen Watson met those requirements.

The Committee also received a presentation from Chief Superintendent Richard Timson of GMP. The key points and themes in the presentation included:

- The journey to improvement;
- Restructures;
- The force-wide approach to reduce demand on public services;
- Police operations; and
- Public and Elected Member engagement.

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

- Work to address violence against women and girls, including the impact so far and plans to continue this work;
- The confidence of communities in reporting crimes such as speeding and anti-social behaviour, including problems getting through on the 101 non-emergency number and residents who are not able to use online chat, and concern that under-reporting of crime in some areas would affect how police resources were deployed;
- What direct engagement would GMP be doing to restore public confidence in the police and how would this tie in with the Community Safety Strategy;
- Reducing serious youth violence;
- How many officers were needed to meet GMP's aims;
- The important role of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and whether those who left were being replaced; and

- What more was needed from the national government to provide Manchester residents with more police and emergency services support.

The Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester advised that violence against women and girls was a very important area of work. She informed Members about the campaign to tackle attitudes towards sexual harassment, which had been started with the #IsThisOkay video. She advised that this was a key campaign underlying the strategy, that it would continue, including a second video, and that they were bringing boys and men into the conversation about tackling this unacceptable behaviour when they witnessed it. She informed Members about the Safer Streets programme, work with the Council on the Women's Night-time Charter, the Good Night Out Guide and Operation Lioness and reported that there was a wide array of work taking place. She informed Members that work was also taking place on Domestic Abuse, rape and serious sexual assault and reported that GMP would be one of 14 police forces taking part in Operation Soteria Bluestone, a scheme which aimed to transform the policing response to rape and serious sexual offences.

Chief Superintendent Richard Timson informed the Committee that there was a force-wide delivery plan for addressing violence against women and girls and scrutiny of that work. He outlined some of the initiatives taking place, working with partners including the student community, including the Sexual Violence Action Network, the Ask Angela initiative and work to set up something similar to the third-party reporting centres which already existed for hate crimes, where students could report sexual violence. The Chair emphasised the importance of supporting all young people, not just students.

The Mayor of Greater Manchester acknowledged the Member's comments about public confidence in reporting crime and advised that there was still work to be done. He reported that call answering on the 999 and 101 numbers had improved dramatically, with the precept having been used to recruit more call handlers, but he recognised that sometimes it could still take too long to speak to someone on the 101 non-emergency number. He advised that live chat was a good option for those who were online and should be promoted more. He informed Members about a new community messaging system which had first been introduced in Trafford and was now being introduced in Manchester and he offered to provide the Committee with further written information on this. He advised that public confidence was based on the speed of call answering and the quality of that initial interaction and then the response that came from that. He reported that GMP was already improving on these and that these improvements would continue.

The Mayor of Greater Manchester stated that serious youth violence was a major concern. He advised that this was a societal issue, not just a policing issue, and that, through the Violence Reduction Unit, a more sophisticated response was being developed. He advised that many young people in the region were living in fear and that a lot of the young people who carried weapons did so because they were afraid, not because they were intending to commit acts of violence. He informed Members about eight community-led pilot projects taking place across Greater Manchester, to address the issues. He stated that he believed this was the right approach to addressing the problem and, with perseverance, would lead to results. Chief Superintendent Richard Timson outlined some of the root causes of youth violence

which needed to be addressed, working in partnership with local communities and organisations who worked in those communities.

The Deputy Mayor reported that there was evidence from Manchester Metropolitan University that the work in communities in relation to youth violence did lead to a sustained reduction in offences. In response to the question about community engagement activity to improve public confidence in GMP, she informed Members that GMP had undertaken a large consultation with local communities over the summer and that engagement work would continue. She stated that she could not provide a figure for what she considered the ideal number of officers; however, at the end of the national officer uplift programme, GMP would have about 8,100 officers, which was significantly higher than the 6,000 it had dropped to during the austerity measures. She highlighted that a large number of these would be recently recruited, inexperienced officers, so further work would be needed to develop their expertise. She advised that the Chief Constable was undertaking a review to ascertain the correct numbers of PCSOs and police officers in each team, although she was not aware of any current decision not to replace PCSOs who left.

The Mayor of Greater Manchester advised that public confidence would be built over time due to local beat officers working in the same neighbourhoods and developing relationships and also by providing a good quality response and the publicising of that response. He advised that Councillors had a key role to play in this. In response to the question about what was needed from the national government, he said that long-term stability in terms of investment in policing was needed, with resources commensurate with the level of threat and harm in communities. He advised that this also applied to council funding as cuts to local government also impacted on community safety. He reported that the government and all political parties in Westminster needed to understand the current situation with local services and the pressures on local people and the risk that further austerity cuts would present.

Chief Superintendent Richard Timson reported that officer capacity and capability were both important and that GMP had lost a lot of that capability during the austerity period, as experienced officers left and were not replaced, and that GMP was working to build that capacity up again. He added that there were a lot of experienced police officers due to retire in the next couple of years. He advised that the cost-of-living crisis presented another challenge as it tended to lead to an increase in vulnerability and criminality.

The Chair thanked the guests for attending the meeting and invited them to attend a future meeting. She asked Chief Superintendent Richard Timson to provide an update at a future meeting on the communications work, public confidence and how the journey to improvement was going and she thanked the guests, and everyone at GMP, for their work. The Statutory Deputy Leader welcomed the opportunity to hear from the three guests at today's meeting and the improvement journey that GMP was on.

## Decisions

1. To invite the guests to attend a future Committee meeting, including asking Chief Superintendent Richard Timson to provide an update on the communications work, public confidence and how the journey to improvement is going.
2. That the Members' questions which had not been raised during the meeting, due to time constraints, will be sent to the Mayor's Office for a response.

### **CESC/22/44            Revenue Budget Update - Cover Report**

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that set out the financial challenge facing the Council, the latest forecast position, and the next steps.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £44m in 2023/24, £85m in 2024/25, and £112m by 2025/26. After the use of c£16m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, this gap reduced to £28m in 2023/24, £69m in 2024/25 and £96m by 2025/26;
- Setting out the high-level position;
- Describing the officer-identified potential savings options to reduce the budget gap totalling £42.3m over three years;
- Noting that even after these proposals there remained a budget gap of £7m to close to get to a balanced budget in 2023/24 and further savings options would be developed between now and January 2023 and be reported back to scrutiny committees in February; and
- Each scrutiny committee was invited to consider the current proposed changes which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed to the final budget proposals in February 2023.

## Decision

To note the report.

### **CESC/22/45            Neighbourhood Directorate 2023/24 Budget**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhood Services) which was the first in the cycle for the budget programme 2023-26. It set out an overview of the services within the remit of this scrutiny committee and their key priorities. The budget growth assumptions in the Medium-Term Financial Plan were set out. The report provided a draft set of officer proposals for further savings for 2023-26, developed in the context of the financial challenge facing the Council.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an overview of the service and priorities;
- A description of the service budget and the proposed changes;

- Describing the proposed savings programme;
- Workforce implications;
- Equality and anti-poverty impact; and
- Future opportunities and risk.

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

- That the Council had been put in the difficult position of having to identify cuts this year and in previous years, through no fault of its own;
- Concern about the impact of job losses in this economic climate;
- Proposals for reducing the hours that the Art Gallery was open;
- The importance of libraries, galleries and culture to the well-being of Manchester residents, in particular recognising the role that libraries played in supporting people, and the impact of the cuts that the Council was being forced to make;
- The impact on local community groups of the proposal to reduce the Neighbourhood Investment Fund (NIF) for each ward;
- Staff turnover in Community Safety and Compliance; and
- The proposed withdrawal of the Central Library digital media lounge.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhood Services) recognised the vital role that libraries played and advised that officers had been very careful to ensure that the cuts proposed did not result in libraries closing or reducing their opening hours. In response to a Member's question, he reported that it was not envisaged that there would be a significant environmental impact of the proposed savings but that there could be a reduced capacity to increase the work to tackle climate change, for example, reducing the capacity for the NIF to support community projects could mean that some local environmental projects did not receive this funding.

In response to a question about the vacancy factor referred to in the report, the Head of Finance explained that this was a way of taking into account that not all staff would be at the top point of their salary grade, that there would be a natural turnover of staff, with posts vacant for a short period, and that not all staff would be in the pension fund, which the Council contributed to. In response to a question about inflationary pressures, he advised that the figures in table one in the cover report included elements of inflation, where they tended to be held corporately rather than under individual directorates.

The Senior Operational Lead (Galleries) reported that the savings proposal related to reducing gallery opening hours would be achieved through removing vacant posts in the visitor engagement team. She advised that her service was reviewing how to reduce the gallery opening hours, which could be through closing for an additional day or opening later in the morning.

The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety reported that there were recruitment and retention problems in the Licensing Out of Hours team due to the shift work and her service was reviewing the shift patterns. She advised that the problems with recruiting to Trading Standards posts was part of a national problem, which the Council was addressing through a "grow your own" programme.

Therefore, she advised that they were not anticipating that the underspend on staffing would be as high in future.

The Citywide Services Manager explained that the digital media lounge had been temporarily closed during the pandemic but had not re-opened and the proposal was to keep it closed. He advised that the lounge had provided access to Mac computers but that these had since been re-located into the Music Library within Central Library. He reported that the digital media lounge had also provided additional desk space, commenting that the amount of study space in the Music Library in Central Library had been slightly increased. He also informed Members about the proposed reduction in the stock team, which would be achieved by people leaving and removing vacant posts. He advised that this was linked to the reduction in the book fund and also to improved technology, which meant that less data-inputting was required when new stock was bought. In response to a question from the Chair, he acknowledged that the proposed reduction in the book fund would be a challenge but advised that officers would look at the areas of purchasing which would have less impact on residents, such as electronic information subscriptions, and stated that he was confident that it would have little impact on the purchasing of books for children.

In response to questions from a number of Members in relation to events, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhood Services) explained that officers had tried to protect funding for important community events and those that had the largest impact on the city, economically and socially, and that, following this consideration, it was proposed that funding be removed from the Christmas Lights Switch On and New Year's Eve Fireworks. He advised that these events could still take place if they were funded by a different source and that these would be savings, not money which would be reinvested elsewhere. He reported that proposals relating to Bonfire Night events were being submitted to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee, including looking at doing alternative community events. He advised that this year, when the Council had not re-introduced its Bonfire Night events after the pandemic, was being used as a trial and that decisions would be subject to an assessment of the impact this had had on communities and neighbourhoods. The Chair advised that the Committee would be receiving a report on this at a future meeting. In response to further questions, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhood Services) advised that the Christmas Lights Switch On would not have taken place this year, regardless of the budget proposals, because Albert Square was not available; however, the proposal was to not fund this event in future years. He advised that the events which it was proposed not to fund either had less of an impact or could potentially be funded from other sources. He advised that the costs of Bonfire events had been increasing and the intention was that the Council would fund other events in the autumn but not bonfires and fireworks, subject to the assessment of what had happened this year. He clarified that the proposals for Bonfire Night would involve making savings of £40,000 but using the rest of the money to fund alternative events.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure stated that no one wanted to be making these decisions but the proposals were being put forward as the ones which would have as limited an impact on the economy of the city and on residents' well-being as possible.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods thanked officers for their hard work in developing these proposals and advised that Members' feedback would be taken on board.

The Statutory Deputy Leader expressed concern about the wider impact of the cuts that the Council was being forced to consider.

## **Decision**

To note the report, subject to Members' comments.

### **CESC/22/46 Homelessness Directorate 2023/24 Budget**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhood Services) which set out the priorities for the services in the remit of this Committee and detailed the initial revenue budget changes proposed by officers.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Service overview and priorities;
- Service budget and proposed changes;
- Workforce; and
- Future opportunities and risks.

The Deputy Leader expressed concern at the cuts that the Council had been faced with over 12 years and the cumulative effect of this, and the factors which were contributing towards people becoming homeless. She highlighted that it was not proposed to reduce the gross homelessness budget as this was an important area; however, it was proposed that, by investing in work to prevent homelessness, savings could be made over the next few years on the amount of money spent on housing people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and other temporary accommodation.

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

- To support investment in work to prevent homelessness;
- How much certainty there was about the potential saving from a change in the Allocations Procedure to allow people to be classified as Homeless at Home at the Prevention stage, as referred to in Appendix 1;
- How much certainty there was that savings to bed-and-breakfast costs could be made through investing in prevention, given the complexity of the issues relating to homelessness and the cost-of-living crisis; and
- To request that the report on Homelessness which was scheduled for the Committee's January 2023 meeting include information about the work being done to factor in the additional challenges associated with the cost-of-living crisis.

The Chair recognised the hard work of those working in the Homelessness Service and asked that the Committee's thanks be passed on to the frontline staff.



The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that the reports presented were currently officer proposals only. He stated that the Government's Autumn Statement and final financial settlement were still to be announced. He stated that the public consultation on the Council's Budget had commenced and would run until 7 January 2023, adding that difficult decisions would need to be taken and it was important to hear the views of Manchester residents. He commented that the financial situation the Council found itself in was not the fault of the Council, adding that the Council was a well-managed and financially responsible organisation and this could be evidenced. He stated that the fault was the direct result of ideological decisions taken by the government over the previous decade. He stated that the budget cuts imposed on Manchester had been unfair. He stated that, if Manchester had received the average cuts to funding, the Council budget would be £77m per year better off. He stated that it was calculated that the gap in Local Authority funding nationally was in excess of £3bn, adding that it was estimated that one in six councils could run out of money next year. He called upon the government to protect councils as these provided essential services for some of the most vulnerable in society, especially in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. The Chair supported these comments.

### **Decision**

To note the report, subject to the above comments, and to note that the Committee will be receiving a further report on homelessness at its January meeting.

### **CESC/22/47            Overview Report**

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained a list of key decisions yet to be taken 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.



# **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

## **Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2022**

### **Present:**

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Abdullatif, Alijah, Amin, Bano, Cooley, Hewitson, Johnson, Judge, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

### **Co-opted Voting Members:**

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

### **Co-opted Non-Voting Members:**

Miss S Iltaf, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative

### **Also present:**

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children Services

Claire McNicholls, Named Nurse (Safeguarding), Manchester NHS Foundation Trust

Detective Chief Inspector Ian McNabb, Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

### **Apologies:**

Councillors Gartside and Lovecy

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

## **CYP/22/50                      Minutes**

### **Decision**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2022.

## **CYP/22/51                      Revenue Budget Update - Cover Report**

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that set out the financial challenge facing the Council, the latest forecast position, and the next steps.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £44m in 2023/24, £85m in 2024/25, and £112m by 2025/26. After the use of c£16m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, this gap reduced to £28m in 2023/24, £69m in 2024/25 and £96m by 2025/26;
- Setting out the high-level position;
- Describing the officer-identified potential savings options to reduce the budget gap totalling £42.3m over three years;
- Noting that even after these proposals there remained a budget gap of £7m to close to get to a balanced budget in 2023/24 and further savings options would be developed between now and January 2023 and be reported back to scrutiny committees in February; and

- Each scrutiny committee was invited to consider the current proposed changes which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed to the final budget proposals in February 2023.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

## **CYP/22/52 Children and Education Services Budget 2023/24**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which was the first in the cycle for the budget programme 2023-26. It set out an overview of the services within the remit of this Committee and their key priorities. The budget growth assumptions in the Medium-Term Financial Plan were set out. The report provided a draft set of officer proposals for further savings for 2023-26, developed in the context of the financial challenge facing the Council.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Service overview and priorities;
- Service budget and proposed changes;
- Future opportunities and risks;
- Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG); and
- Workforce implications.

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

- Concern and frustration about the Council being forced into the position of having to make cuts over many years and the impact of this on children and families, particularly when they were also facing the cost-of-living crisis;
- Concern about the financial position that schools were in and what could be done to continue to make improvements to schools with less money;
- Noting that Manchester's Children's Services had recently been judged as "good" by Ofsted, were there concerns about maintaining that improvement, especially in light of the cuts that would need to be made;
- The impact of cuts to youth services;
- Recruitment of foster carers and support for kinship carers;
- How could the budget pressures in the High Needs Block of the DSG be addressed;
- Concern about the costs of travel to school for children whose families had been placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in a different area;
- Concern about how some academies managed their budgets; and
- Concern about families not being able to afford school uniforms and that many families who were on low incomes were not eligible for free school meals.

The Chair highlighted the combination of pressures affecting families and the importance of universal free school meals. She stated that the Council had been forced by the government to make cuts over a number of years, that services had

been cut to the bone, the impact this was having on children and families and that it was not possible to keep finding more cuts. She stated that the government had said it was committed to levelling up in the most deprived areas but that this had not happened.

The Executive Member for Children Services reported that the Council had made youth services a big priority and that it was very disappointing to have to be considering this reduction; however, he highlighted that the Council had significantly increased its investment in youth services in 2022 so, while this proposal represented a decrease in this additional investment, it was still a higher budget for youth services than in previous years. He expressed concern that, while the Council was working with partners to improve the lives of children and young people, these partner organisations were also experiencing funding cuts, which made this more challenging.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services acknowledged the concerns that Members had raised, and the challenges presented; however, he reported that Children's Services had officers who were very committed to Manchester and to children and young people. He advised that the Council had in place good partnership working, leadership from senior officers, political leadership and a focus on the quality of social work practice. He reported that the first priority when considering budget options was always that children and young people in the city were safe. He advised that his service was focused on the well-being of children, rather than achieving Ofsted judgements, which should validate what his team already knew about how they were performing. He highlighted the valuable role of foster carers and the need to consider what the cost-of-living rise would mean for them. He reported that their mileage costs had already been reviewed, along with an inflation uplift from next year, and that consideration was being given to what more could be done in the immediate and short-term. He suggested that the Committee might want to consider a report on foster carers at a future meeting. The Deputy Director of Children's Services highlighted the recommendations in the Care Review about benefits available to kinship carers, advising that it was expected that the government would provide a response to this later in the year.

The Head of Finance (Children, Education and Schools) reported that many Headteachers were very concerned about their schools' future financial position. She advised that most of the DSG was distributed to schools, that a smaller amount was retained by the Council for the services it provided and that the Council was spending more than the amount it received on these services, with the High Needs Block being an area of overspend. She outlined some of the support and advice that the Council was providing to schools, including on budgets, energy costs and procurement. In response to a question from the Chair, she explained how schools with excessive balances were dealt with, with some money being clawed back from 11 schools.

In response to a Member's question about support for children arriving in the UK, the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services highlighted the Council's pledge to support Looked After Children and Care Leavers with insecure immigration status. He reported that specific commissioned support was provided to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and that the Council's New Arrivals Team

had been highly commended in a national awards scheme. In response to a question from the Chair about the High Needs Block, he advised that the number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) had increased by around 2000 in recent years and he outlined how the Council was now working with partners on joint commissioning for children who needed a specialist provision, with costs being shared. He clarified that Home To School transport was specifically for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) but that families who were re-located to a different area from their school could receive a free travel pass.

The Executive Member for Children's Services informed Members that the Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services and the Education Business Partner were currently auditing schools on their offer for free school uniforms. He acknowledged the Member's concern about the limited eligibility for free school meals and expressed support for a universal offer of free school meals. In response to a Member's question, he advised that Manchester paid a good rate to its foster carers compared to some local authorities but would be looking into making an one-off additional payment.

## **Decisions**

1. To note the report, subject to Members' comments.
2. To recommend that Councillors lobby the government to address the issues raised.
3. Noting that the Committee is not expecting a further budget report until February 2023, to request that Councillors be kept updated on the financial situation outside of the meetings.

## **CYP/22/53                      LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) Annual Report 2021-2022**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an overview and analysis of the management of allegations against adults who worked with children in a paid or voluntary capacity in Manchester, for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. This included how effective the safeguarding partnership was in discharging its statutory responsibilities. The report considered the learning and development over the last twelve months and set the priorities for 2022-2023 based on the analysis of activity.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Keeping children safe;
- Overview of enquiries and referrals data;
- Managing allegations;
- Service reflection;
- Service achievements; and
- Key priority areas.

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

were:

- What happened in situations where an allegation could not be proven;
- Information-sharing and support on safeguarding for voluntary organisations and faith groups; and
- Were there any concerns about under-reporting.

The Service Lead (Safeguarding) reported that LADO investigations were multi-agency, including the individual's organisation, and that, in cases where allegations were not proven, any training needs, for example, understanding that they should not be alone with children, would still be identified. She informed Members about the training that was available for organisations, including sessions to make them aware of the role of the LADO and that they could ring the LADO for advice if there was anything they were not sure about.

The Strategic Lead (Safeguarding and Practice Improvement) advised that, although they could not be sure of what was not being reported, when compared to other north-west councils, Manchester appeared to be doing well in terms of people knowing about and using the service. She advised that they wanted to be able to focus on prevention, helping organisations to have recruitment and work practices which kept children safe, and making parents aware of what standards should be put in place for groups involving children.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Service Lead (Safeguarding) advised that in the previous year the LADO had received no referrals from Youth Justice and Youth Work but that, following training, enquiries and referrals from these areas had increased. She agreed with a point from the Chair about using a range of methods, such as billboards and libraries, to make people aware of the safeguarding measures that they needed to put in place if they were running a group for children and young people. In response to a question from the Chair about private tuition, she advised that the service had a responsibility in relation to making parents aware of safeguarding, including when arranging private tuition for their children, and the role of the LADO. The Chair advised that information should also be provided in other languages.

## **Decisions**

1. To note the report, including the progress and impact being achieved by the LADO service in Manchester.
2. To agree the goals set out for 2021/2022 with regards to the continuous drive for improvement of service delivery and the impact on the children's workforce and children.

## **CYP/22/54**

## **Adoption Counts Annual Report**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which fulfilled the reporting obligations in the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) Adoption and Children Act 2002.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Contextual information;
- Performance;
- Quality of children's reports;
- Marketing, recruitment and assessment of adopters;
- Practice developments;
- Adoption Panel;
- Adoption Support;
- Recommendations; and
- Governance and future opportunities.

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

- The importance of providing training on developmental trauma;
- The recruitment of potential adopters from a range of communities, including work in mosques in north Manchester to encourage people to consider adoption, and that this kind of work should be replicated elsewhere;
- The importance of making people aware of the package of support that Manchester offered to adoptive parents; and
- The importance of life story work.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services expressed his support for work to recruit adopters from diverse communities through community leaders, which he advised, Adoption Counts and the councils wanted to continue. In response to a Member's question on how many black children had been adopted by non-black families, he advised that he could obtain this information and provide it. He outlined the support available to adopters before and after adoption, including high quality training and support in relation to trauma, and confirmed the use of an ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) trauma-informed approach in the service. In response to a Member's question, he advised that there were a range of factors leading to the increase in Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). He recognised the importance of life story work and advised that there had been a focus on the quality of this area of work for some time. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services shared positive comments from an Ofsted inspector about a Later Life letter they had seen as part of their inspection.

In response to a Member's question about the adoption of older children, including cases where a foster family wanted to adopt a young person they were fostering, the Deputy Director of Children's Services advised that this should remain open as an option for an older child, if it would meet the child's needs and give them a sense of permanency. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services highlighted that, after a child had been living with a foster carer for 12 months, the foster carer could apply for adoption without needing the permission of the local authority.

In response to questions from the Chair, the Deputy Director of Children's Services advised that there was a sophisticated advertising campaign to recruit potential



adopters, including targeted advertising on social media, and work to find people to adopt sibling groups. In response to a further question, he reported that there were still some delays in legal proceedings but that these were easing.

## **Decision**

To note the report, subject to the above comments.

## **CYP/22/55                      Manchester Complex Safeguarding Hub**

The Committee received a presentation of the Strategic Lead (Complex Safeguarding) and Claire McNicholls, Named Nurse (Safeguarding) on the Manchester Complex Safeguarding Hub Annual Report 2021/2022.

The main points and themes within the presentation included:

- Overview of the Complex Safeguarding Hub;
- Partnership arrangements;
- Governance, accountability and assurance arrangements;
- Performance and outcomes;
- Impact; and
- Priorities 2022/2023.

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

- Grooming via social media;
- Disproportionality in terms of referrals in relation to young people from black and minority backgrounds and that it would be useful to receive an update when more work had been done in relation to this;
- What support was available for families of children who were being exploited by criminal gangs;
- Support for child victims with SEND, in particular from the police; and
- How to increase awareness, for example of the signs to look out for in the exploitation of children and new online threats, including engaging with parents, communities and faith organisations.

The Strategic Lead of the Complex Safeguarding Hub explained that the methods used to target children for exploitation were dynamic and that, in particular since the pandemic, exploitation of children had moved online in relation to both child criminal exploitation (CCE) and child sexual exploitation (CSE). In response to a question about why referrals for CSE were much lower than for CCE, she reported that this kind of exploitation could often be hidden. She reported that very young children often now had devices, that social media and games were used to target children and that work was taking place to raise awareness about these risks. She outlined the support available for families whose children were being exploited by criminal gangs, including Early Help, support from a Social Worker and commissioned early intervention support.

Detective Chief Inspector Ian McNabb from GMP informed Members about support which would be available for families in relation to CCE from the not-for-profit organisation Catch22. He highlighted some of the challenges for the police in dealing with CCE and the need to look at a range of ways to respond to it, including disruption. In response to the question about children with SEND, he advised that the police had made significant improvements in how it dealt with vulnerable victims and he outlined some of the approaches that could be used, such as finding the best way to communicate with the child, ensuring the child was supported through the process and looking for other evidence. In response to a Member's question about "paedophile hunters", he reported that most cases ended in successful prosecutions, although sometimes these cases did present additional risks for the police in managing the perpetrator and in the prosecution, due to the way the evidence was presented. He advised that a case-by-case assessment was carried out in these situations. In response to the question about the use of social media in the exploitation of children, he advised that a lot of work was taking place on this, including at a regional, national and international level. In response to a question from the Chair about parents who colluded with an abuser, he advised that this would have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, working with partners, with the safety of the child underpinning the approach. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that the safeguarding and welfare of children was the first priority and, while wanting to work with parents, if they were not able to safeguard their child, the Council had a statutory duty to intervene.

The Executive Member for Children's Services recognised the importance of raising awareness of safeguarding, including the evolving risks in relation to social media. He stated that it was important to hear young people's voices and informed Members about a young people-led safeguarding awareness conference which had been organised by Manchester Safeguarding Partnership.

The Strategic Head of Early Help advised that they were utilising some of the successful approaches to community awareness raising which had been used in relation to modern slavery and human trafficking, working with organisations who identified community champions and faith-based leaders. She reported that they were using social media, targeted radio programmes and local groups, in addition to work with foster carers and schools. In response to a question from the Chair, she informed the Committee about place-based work taking place in part of the city on early prevention, working with a range of partners.

Claire McNicholls, Named Nurse (Safeguarding) informed the Committee how, in response to CSE referrals decreasing, the Specialist Nurse and Social Worker had visited hospitals across the city to raise awareness, including promoting the risk tool staff could use to identify exploitation. She also informed Members about the training package on complex safeguarding which had recently been developed.

The Strategic Lead of the Complex Safeguarding Hub outlined a range of work to raise awareness and reported that the Hub gathered information on emerging themes and shared this information.

## **Decision**

To note the report, subject to the above comments.

### **CYP/22/56 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.