

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2024

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors E Bell, Fletcher, Gartside, Jafri, Lovecy, Mandongwe, McHale, Muse, Nunney, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services

Rebecca, Care Consultant

Aliya, Care Consultant

Apologies:

Councillor Amin

Ms S Davies, Parent Governor Representative

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

CYP/24/22 Minutes

The Chair welcomed new and returning Committee Members.

Decisions

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024.
2. To receive the minutes of the Ofsted Subgroup meeting held on 28 February 2024.

CYP/24/23 Youth Investment Fund

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery provided a verbal update regarding the Youth Investment Fund. He reported that the Council had been working with the youth sector since August 2022 on bids for this fund for new or improved youth facilities and that significant time and resources had been dedicated to this work. He stated that in autumn 2023 the Council had been informed that six bids were progressing to Phase 2, advising that, if all six bids had progressed to completion, Manchester would have received £10 million of investment in capital assets for youth provision. He reported that the Council had received an email on 22 March 2024 informing them that there would now be no funding for this work in 2024/2025, and there was no information provided on whether there would be funding in future years. He reported that it appeared that the funding had been withdrawn but there was a lack of clarity from the Government on this. He informed Members that the Deputy

Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services had written to the Secretary of State on 25 March 2024. He reported that the Council had been informed by Social Investment Business, which was running the Youth Investment Fund on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), that there would be some funding available for architect and survey fees and that there would be an update by the end of June.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services reported that he and the Council were deeply dissatisfied about this, highlighting the amount of work that had gone into the bids, by both the Council and youth service providers, and how badly needed these facilities were. He reported that, regardless of the Government response, representatives from the Council would be meeting with all the providers affected to try to find ways forward so that all the work which had taken place was not wasted, for example, identifying and supporting them to bid for other capital funding.

Committee Members expressed that they were extremely disappointed with this news, noting that youth services had already been badly affected by austerity cuts since 2010. They thanked officers and youth service providers for all their hard work on these bids and recognised how frustrating and demoralising this news must be for them. Members expressed concern about the lack of clarity from the Government and asked the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services to continue to pursue this. Members commented that it was important to explore alternative options with youth providers, even if these were not of the same scale as could have been achieved through the Youth Investment Fund.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services reported that he would continue to pursue a clear response from the Secretary of State, including escalating the matter through MPs if necessary. In response to a question from the Chair about the impact of this news, he advised that the investment was for specific projects so it would be the particular organisations which had been bidding for the funding that would be affected, rather than the sector more broadly. He reported that, without this funding, these smaller organisations which did not have a permanent base would be unable to scale up their provision in the areas of the city where the new facilities had been planned; however, he advised that the Council would be meeting with the affected providers to explore different ways to meet this need, for example, alternative funding sources or making use of buildings owned by the Council.

Decision

To receive a further update at an appropriate time.

CYP/24/24 Corporate Parenting Co-operative Strategy

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which outlined the changes and developments made to the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The development of the Strategy in coproduction and consultation with cared for children and care leavers;
- The four thematic outcomes (Happy, Healthy, Safe, Successful);
- The 12 expectations set by cared for children and care leavers;
- The governance structure;
- Impact; and
- Next steps.

The Committee welcomed the Participation Support Worker, who was a Facilitator for the Care Consultants, and two Care Consultants, Rebecca and Aliya. The Participation Support Worker carried out a short exercise with Members to emphasise that they were all Corporate Parents for approximately 1500 children.

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

- To welcome the progress being made and the innovative work taking place;
- Speaking positively about their experience of attending Corporate Family Cooperative meetings and stating that these meetings were a positive step to improve decision-making and empower children and young people;
- That more Members should attend the Corporate Family Cooperative meetings and questioning the timing of the meetings;
- Member training and strengthening the lines between Manchester's Corporate Family Cooperative (MCFC) and Members;
- Support for care leavers, including support with accommodation, recognising that many young people who were not care-experienced continued to receive support from their parents beyond childhood; and
- Involving Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in this work.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services informed Members that work was currently taking place on Member training and that each political group within the Council would be asked to nominate a named representative as a link with the Corporate Family. He reported that the time of the meeting had previously been changed and that it was challenging to find a time that worked well for everyone, including Members, professionals and children and young people of different ages.

The Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Practice Development) reported that new Member training on corporate parenting had been co-designed with Care Consultants and that suitable dates for training sessions were currently being identified. She reported that the intention was to hold face-to-face training sessions which might then be filmed and available online as a refresher course. She highlighted Members' role, including meeting the 12 expectations within the Strategy and holding others to account on these, creating opportunities to listen to cared for children and care leavers, not just to officers, and in using Members' connections, experiences and influence to their benefit. She informed Members that the Council had a statutory responsibility towards its care leavers up to the age of 25 and explained that it provided a professional safety net while supporting the young people to grow into independent adults, be part of their community and develop safe, connected relationships with their family. She reported that there were UASC who

wanted to become Care Consultants and that others were encouraged to express their views through staff that they had developed positive relationships with. The Deputy Director of Children's Services highlighted the importance of positive relationships with peers and outlined how this was being fostered for UASC.

In response to a Member's question, the Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Practice Development) provided information on some of the training and skills development taking place for Care Consultants and confirmed that there would be mentoring opportunities, including experienced Care Consultants supporting new Care Consultants. In response to a question about developing young inspectors, she informed Members about a Greater Manchester scheme to develop young inspectors and reported that Manchester would take the learning from this to develop its own scheme which would utilise the expertise of young people who had experienced care themselves.

The Participation Support Worker outlined some of the wide-ranging areas that the Corporate Family focussed on, including accommodation, well-maintained public spaces, medical facilities and enabling cared for children and care leavers to live healthy lives, not just up to the age of 25 but beyond this. In response to a Member's question, he reported that there were currently between 20 and 30 Care Consultants with a range of different personalities and personal circumstances.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services reported that the Council had passed a motion to make being care experienced a protected characteristic so care leavers would receive the support they needed from the Council throughout their life, not just up to the age of 25, citing work that had taken place with the Homelessness Service as well as access to employment opportunities as examples. He spoke positively about the changes to the Corporate Family Cooperative meetings and how the young people had influenced Council decisions through these meetings, for example, one meeting resulting in their allowances being increased.

In response to a Member's question about funding for hobbies, the Deputy Director of Children's Services reported that foster carers received an allowance which could be used for this purpose. He highlighted that the new Education Strategy, which the Committee had considered at its March meeting, had included commitments on the opportunities that children should have access to and that an offer of experiences that children should have before the age of 10 was also being developed. He acknowledged the challenge of balancing limited resources, while highlighting that there were some no-cost and low-cost activities, as well as those which required funding. The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services reported that cared for children's Personal Education Plans (PEPs) could include broader enrichment activities, and that the additional funding that schools received for these pupils could be used to fund these broader activities. He highlighted the importance of Members who were Governors ensuring that this money was being spent in the best way and that young people were involved in the decisions about how the funds intended for their benefit were spent.

The Chair stated that she welcomed any comments, feedback or questions from the Care Consultants and that, if there was anything that they thought of after the

meeting, this could be passed on to the Committee via the Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Practice Development). She commented on the positive change from the previous Corporate Parenting Panel meetings to the current child and young person-led Corporate Family Cooperative meetings and on the use of different venues, suggesting that venues in different parts of the city could be considered. She emphasised the importance of listening to children and young people, not just staff. She thanked the young people for attending today's meeting.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/24/25 Re-establishment of the Ofsted Subgroup

The Committee considered the report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided the Committee with the current terms of reference and work programme for the Subgroup. The Committee was asked to re-establish the Ofsted Subgroup for the municipal year 2024 - 2025 and agree the terms of reference, work programme and membership of the Subgroup.

Councillor Lovecy, as Chair of the Ofsted Subgroup, outlined the purpose and work of the Subgroup and encouraged Members to join the Subgroup. Following a Member's comments, the Committee Chair agreed that the date of the first Subgroup meeting would be reviewed. She asked Members to contact her and the Committee Support Officer after the meeting if they wanted to join the Subgroup.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services highlighted that, due to changes in regulations, independent supported living was now subject to Ofsted inspection and that the Subgroup could consider these inspection reports as well. The Committee Chair supported these comments and suggested that the Subgroup might want to have a meeting focusing on this.

Decisions

1. To re-establish the Ofsted Subgroup for the 2024 - 2025 municipal year and agree the terms of reference and work programme, subject to the above comments.
2. To ask Members to contact the Chair and Committee Support Officer if they want to join the Subgroup.

CYP/24/26 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.