

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020

Present:

Councillor Stone – in the Chair

Councillors Sameem Ali, Cooley, Hewitson, T Judge, Kilpatrick, Lovecy, Reeves, Reid and Wilson

Co-opted Voting Members:

Ms Z Derraz, Parent Governor Representative

Ms S Barnwell, Parent Governor Representative

Mrs J Miles, Diocese of Salford Representative

Dr W Omara, Parent Governor Representative

Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Mr L Duffy, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative

Ms J Fleet, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children and Schools

John Rowlands, Greater Manchester Academies Trust

Apologies:

Councillors Alijah, McHale, Madeleine Monaghan and Sadler

CYP/20/01 Minute's Silence – Councillor Harland

The Committee held a minute's silence for Councillor Andy Harland, who had recently passed away.

CYP/20/02 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019.

CYP/20/03 Updated Financial Strategy and Budget Reports 2020/21

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, which provided an update on the Council's overall financial position and set out the next steps in the budget process. In doing so, the report outlined officer proposals for how the Council could deliver a balanced budget for 2020/21.

In conjunction with the above, the Committee also received and considered the draft Council Business Plan for 2020/21 and the Children and Education Services Budget 2020/21.

Officers highlighted that the 2020/21 budget would be a one year roll over budget. It would reflect the fact the Council had declared a climate emergency and would also continue to reflect the priorities identified in the previous three-year budget strategy.

Taken together, the reports illustrated how the directorate would work to deliver the Our Corporate Plan and progress towards the vision set out in the Our Manchester Strategy.

The Executive Member for Children and Schools informed Members of the context of the budget proposals, reporting that children's services were under pressure across the country with the Local Government Association (LGA) reporting a 140% increase in demand nationally, while funding had reduced. He reported that the child population in Manchester had increased significantly, creating increased budget pressures, but that the Council had made investing in children's services a priority. He drew Members' attention to some of the key proposals within the report.

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

- The reliance on the social care reserve to fund services and was the Council lobbying the government for more funding;
- The volatility of the budget;
- The commissioning strategy for placements;
- Recruitment and retention of Social Workers;
- Whether there was a tipping point at which so many maintained schools had converted to academies that it was no longer financial viable for the Council to support the remaining maintained schools;
- The reduction in the number of adoptions in 2018/19; and
- Plans to remove the Council's funding to the Manchester Foundation Trust (MFT) for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and to use the funding to support the development of provision for children with high and complex needs, recommending that the Committee should consider these issues at a future meeting.

The Head of Finance advised Members that the social care reserve was being used over a three year period. She reported that this spending was not sustainable and that, while efficiencies were expected to be made, they would not be sufficient to fund services once the reserves had been used. She reported that this approach was being taken with the expectation that the national government would produce a longer-term budget strategy to address the pressures councils across the country were facing in funding children's services. She informed Members that the Council was lobbying the government in relation to the Fair Funding Formula. The Chair advised Members to continue to lobby the government for additional funding.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services advised Members that the level of need for children's services was volatile and there were some aspects which could not be predicted, such as the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children arriving in the city; however, he reported that officers had assessed as far as possible the expected level of demand, for example, looking at known factors such as population growth and making assumptions based on previous data and information from comparable councils. He informed the Committee that the service

was as confident as it could be about the expected level of demand and the impact of the service's strategies. He advised Members that the Sufficiency Strategy was central to the service's spending and he suggested that the Committee consider a report on this at a future meeting, to which the Chair agreed.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services drew Members' attention to the information in the report on work to improve the recruitment and retention of Social Workers. He advised the Committee that Social Workers tended to make decisions about whether to continue with their career in Social Work once they had been in the role for two years so the Council was looking into putting in place some measures to encourage the staff to stay in the role and continue to develop. He reported that another priority was to retain the service's experienced Senior Social Workers and support their development and further progression into management roles. He advised Members that, while some turnover of staff was healthy, retaining permanent staff was important to enable relationship-building and to support the stability of the practice model.

The Director of Education informed Members that a lot of the funding in the central block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funded the Council's duties relating to all schools, including academies, for example funding the Admissions Service, although the Council did receive some funding for duties specifically relating to maintained schools. She informed Members that only 35% of Manchester schools were academies and there were not currently many maintained schools converting to academies. Therefore, she advised Members that officers were not currently concerned about reaching a tipping point where it would be difficult to support a small number of remaining maintained schools, although there was a possibility that the new government could introduce legislation which would change this.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services advised the Committee that there had been a reduction in the number of adoptions nationally due to a number of factors and outlined how the Council was working as part of the regional adoption agency Adoption Counts to place children with adoptive parents; however, he advised that the Council's Permanence Strategy was not only about adoption but about giving children emotional, physical, legal and psychological permanence through a range of methods, highlighting that the number of children achieving permanence through a Special Guardianship Order had increased significantly.

Decisions

1. To support the strategy set out in the reports and to ask the Executive and the Council to continue to lobby the government for extra resources for schools and children's services.
2. To note that the Committee will receive further information at its February meeting.
3. To consider the impact of the Council removing its funding for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) at a future meeting.
4. To receive a report on the Sufficiency Strategy.

5. To consider the provision of placements for children with high and complex needs in a future report.
6. To continue to monitor work to achieve permanence for children, including through the Corporate Parenting Panel.

CYP/20/04 The Manchester Inclusion Strategy – Preventing Exclusion and Supporting Children and Young People to Thrive Implementation Update

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided a further update on the Manchester Inclusion Strategy which was formally launched in November 2019. The report provided a brief overview of activities to implement the strategy and provided more detail on the Every Child Project. The report also provided information about the Strategy Steering Group and key areas of work going forward.

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

- Strategy Launch Event;
- Inclusion Strategy Implementation Plan and Steering Group; and
- The Every Child Project.

John Rowlands from the Greater Manchester Academies Trust provided the Committee with further information on the Every Child Project, which was one of the strands of the Manchester Inclusion Strategy implementation plan and was initially focusing on growing the understanding and meeting the capability needs of all Year 7 pupils across nine secondary schools in the city.

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

- That the reduction in exclusions in Manchester, while exclusions nationally were increasing, demonstrated that the strategy was already having a positive effect;
- What was new in this strategy that was not being done before;
- The positive impact of the UNICEF Rights Respecting Award;
- Behaviour management issues in primary schools, the need to support children through the transition from primary school to secondary school and whether primary schools should be involved in the Every Child Project;
- The importance of supporting young people post-16 in order to prevent them from becoming Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET); and
- To welcome that academies, as well as maintained schools, were engaging in this work.

The Executive Member for Children and Schools informed Members that the Inclusion Strategy was not just a Council Strategy and was not a single piece of work. He advised that what was new about the strategy was that it brought together all the different work which was taking place to address this issue. John Rowlands reported that schools were not just looking at the data but were now talking about the

broader context, including what had led to a child's previous exclusions, what strategies could be put in place to support the child and what could be learnt and improved from looking at earlier behaviours.

The Virtual School Head advised Members that the Every Child Project was one element of a multi-faceted strategy which was building on excellent work which was already taking place within Manchester. She informed the Committee that work was taking place to look at the primary sector and the transition from primary to secondary school. She acknowledged the importance of supporting young people post-16, reporting that the Virtual School was already working to address this for Our Young People (Looked After Children and Care Leavers). She highlighted that the Inclusion Strategy steering group included representatives of post-16 institutions.

John Rowlands advised Members that the Inclusion Strategy considered the whole of the child's life rather than taking their behaviour in school in isolation and looked at what could be done to address any issues the child's family were experiencing. He reported that this involved identifying assets in, for example, the community, primary schools and the child's family and how these could be used, such as utilising parents' knowledge of their child and treating them as an equal partner. He recognised the importance of work in primary schools, for example, in addressing the impact of poverty and deprivation on literacy levels, and advised that he welcomed the opportunity for further work with primary schools and work to improve the transition from primary school to high school. He also outlined how his school, Manchester Communication Academy, was working with local feeder primary schools through their Family Zone, tracking pupils from age 5 to 16, sharing resources and intelligence and taking a co-ordinated approach, for example, where siblings were in different schools. The Director of Education outlined how locality working would be used to promote inclusion, with a range of agencies working together to address the issues within their area. In response to a Member's question, the Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services reported that a future report on locality working would provide further information on how the work of services such as Early Help and Early Years and other agencies would be brought together.

The Chair encouraged Members to attend the briefing on the new Ofsted Framework which was due to take place on 22 January 2020.

Decisions

1. To receive a further report in 12 months' time on how this work is progressing, linked in with the 2019/2020 figures on the number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions.
2. To invite a representative from the primary sector next time the Inclusion Strategy is considered.

CYP/20/05 Out of School Settings

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which provided an update on the DfE (Department for Education) Pilot Project on Out of School Settings which aimed to support local authorities to test approaches to mapping,

identifying and intervening in out of school settings, improve understanding of risks and intervention approaches in out of school settings and consider how existing legal powers could be best utilised and identify any gaps in the current legislative framework.

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

- Manchester Award for Supplementary Schools;
- Pilot DfE Project on Out of School Settings and building on successes through the pilot;
- Legislation;
- Initial mapping of out of school settings;
- Safeguarding arrangements in Manchester;
- Training for out of school settings providers;
- National concerns and the Council's responses;
- Findings to date; and
- Strengths and challenges in Manchester.

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

- To welcome the work that had taken place in Manchester on out of school settings over many years, noting that this had enabled the Council to take part in the DfE's pilot project;
- To welcome the benefits to children of being able to participate in a wide range of out of school activities, while recognising the challenges this presented in ensuring there were appropriate safeguarding procedures in place;
- Request for further information on the Safe After School campaign;
- The information that was available on a ward basis;
- Whether the good practice in Manchester could be shared with other Greater Manchester authorities; and
- The legal powers available to the Council, noting the limits of these powers and also the challenge of different legislation being the responsibility of different services.

The Safeguarding Lead for Education reported that the Safe After School campaign aimed to raise the awareness of parents and communities about safeguarding in out of schools settings so that parents who were planning to send their child to an out of school setting knew the right questions to ask to check that appropriate safeguarding measures were in place. She reported that a range of resources were being developed including flyers to be delivered to schools, libraries and other venues, as well as being available electronically. She advised that, once these were ready, she would also circulate them to Members of the Committee. She confirmed that the Youth Engagement Team had mapped all provision that they were aware of in each ward, including supplementary schools, and offered to circulate this to Members. The Executive Member for Children and Schools supported a Member's suggestion that officers liaise with Neighbourhood Managers to gather information on out of school settings in particular wards and to progress information-sharing through Ward

Co-ordination. The Chair welcomed the proposal to share information with Ward Councillors through Ward Co-ordination. He advised any Member with concerns or information about a setting in their ward to raise this directly with officers. A Member suggested that this information could also be shared with schools and that schools could gather information by asking parents what out of school activities their child took part in.

The Safeguarding Lead for Education informed Members that the DfE was keen for learning and good practice to be shared and that the Council had already been sharing good practice on out of school settings with some other Greater Manchester councils, as well as using some work which Rochdale Council had already done to develop the 'Safe After School' campaign. The Executive Member for Children and Schools reported that he, the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services and the Director of Education were involved in the Greater Manchester Children's Board and would share this work through that and other appropriate forums.

The Safeguarding Lead for Education reported that there were some gaps in the legal powers available to her team but that, if there was a concern about safeguarding, they would use these powers, working with partners as appropriate. She advised Members that her team had good relationships with a number of partners and that being part of the pilot project had enabled them to strengthen and develop these relationships. The Strategic Director for Children and Education Services informed the Committee that the DfE pilot should seek to answer the question of whether more legislative powers were needed in this area.

In response to a Member's question, the Safeguarding Lead for Education informed Members that the number of children in Elective Home Education (EHE) had increased in Manchester and nationally. She advised the Committee that her team was using positive engagement to work with families who were home educating, as their legal powers were limited. She reported that a lot of families who home educated used out of school settings and provided her team with information on these settings. The Executive Member for Children and Schools advised Members that the Council would prefer a stronger legislative framework for EHE.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. To welcome that information would be shared through Ward Co-ordination.
3. To recommend that Members lobby the government to improve legislation relating to supplementary schools and Elective Home Education (EHE).

CYP/20/06 Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy

The Committee received a report of the Executive Member for Children and Schools which provided an overview of work undertaken and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester Strategy for those areas within the portfolio of the Executive Member for Children and Schools.

The Executive Member for Children and Schools referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:

- Leaving Care Service;
- Inclusion Strategy;
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND);
- Early Years;
- Budget and staffing;
- Poverty and homelessness;
- Complex safeguarding;
- Young carers; and
- Climate change.

In response to a Member's question, the Executive Member for Children and Schools informed Members about work to expand school places for children with SEND, advising that this work was still ongoing.

A Member welcomed that the report included information on work to address climate change. She advised that the Council should provide more leadership to schools on this issue and requested that further information on this be provided in a future report. The Executive Member for Children and Schools reported that tackling climate change was a shared responsibility, not just the responsibility of the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport, and highlighted how the relevant Executive Members were working together on a Young Person's Summit on this issue which was focused on taking action. He reported that the Director of Education had met with the Manchester Climate Change Agency and had asked them to work with schools on some specific aspects of this.

In response to a Member's question, the Executive Member for Children and Schools reported that homeless families and families who were at risk of homelessness were key issues of concern for him and that increased focus was being given to addressing these issues.

Decision

To thank the Executive Member for Children and Schools for his report.

CYP/20/07 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, subject to the additional items agreed at the meeting under previous items of business.