

Medway Council
Meeting of Children and Young People Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 27 September 2012

6.30pm to 8.47pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present: Councillors: Baker, Cooper, Gilry, Irvine, Kemp (Vice-Chairman), Mackness, Price, Purdy, Royle (Chairman), Smith, Tolhurst and Turpin

Co-opted Members with voting rights on educational issues only:

Kwashie Anang (Parent Governor representative) and Jim Grogan (Roman Catholic Church representative)

Added members without voting rights:

Bryan Frost (Governor representative), Jane Heyes (Headteacher representative) and Doyin Yahyi (Medway Youth Parliament representative)

Substitutes: Councillors:
Etheridge
Griffin
Shaw (substitute for Councillor Craven)

In Attendance: Angela Drum, Head of Legal Services
Hilary Gerhard, Senior Advisor, Inclusion and Diversity
Karen Kennedy, Performance Manager
Sally Morris, Assistant Director, Commissioning and Strategy
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults Services
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer

420 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 17 July 2012 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

421 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clarke, Craven and Iles. Apologies for absence were also received from Samantha Collins (Parent Governor representative), Shirley Griffiths (LINK representative) and Sam Tutt (Medway Youth Parliament representative).

422 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

423 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

424 Update on Child Development Centre move to Temple site

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Commissioning and Strategy, provided Members with a brief explanation of the background to the Child Development Centre, which had been located within Medway Maritime Hospital until the accommodation was needed for more beds. After lengthy consultation it had been agreed that the service would be placed within part of the old Temple School site. She explained that due to various changes from the health reforms, progress of this had been delayed however, it was hoped that the Strategic Health Authority would shortly confirm authorisation of the use of corporate monies to progress the development so work on the site could then begin.

Officers then answered questions from Members, which included: -

- Confirmation of transport infrastructure;
- Other uses of the remainder of the Temple site;
- Consideration of other accommodation.

In response the Assistant Director, Commissioning and Strategy confirmed that transport infrastructure had been carefully considered as part of the feasibility study and that road networks to the site were good with adequate parking available and additionally there were a number of bus services to the site. Furthermore, she confirmed that the remainder of the Temple site (three quarters of the retained part of the site) would be used for educational purposes, supporting the integrated working model for the service. It was also confirmed that other properties had been considered for the service but due to the space required there were very few options available and so it had been decided to use the Temple site.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

425 Provisional Test and Examination Results for 2012

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Inclusion and Improvement provided the committee with a detailed presentation setting out the provision test and examination results for Medway and how they compared nationally. She explained that results for all

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key stages had improved from the previous year, however, in comparison to national results, for Key stage 2 Medway was ranked as joint bottom with another local authority. She confirmed that some schools had made outstanding progress, with one school improving its results by 30%. She also reported that of the eleven schools that had been below the floor target in 2011, nine had improved to above floor in 2012. Two schools remained below floor this year and two schools had dipped to below floor. The Assistant Director was also able to report on the local authority's performance on the phonics testing, which had been the first year this had been tested and unfortunately, despite the improvement of Key Stage 1 results, Medway's performance was 11% below the national average and therefore this performance data needed interrogation to understand what went wrong and what needed to be done to improve results in 2013.

The committee then asked officers a number of questions and made various comments, which included: -

- Confirmation that phonics programmes are used in Medway schools;
- Concern that the improvement was not good enough;
- That schools' governing bodies and leadership teams need to be supported to improve together
- That schools in Medway should improve their working together to peer challenge, share best practice and work together to improve and that this is done in a supportive and co-operative way;
- That a report back on the analysis of the phonics performance, what went wrong and what interventions can be made to improve performance be brought back to a future meeting of the committee;
- That a report back on analysis of the schools that made good improvement to identify best practice and how this can be shared with other schools across Medway;
- Concerns about budgetary implications following school funding reforms and a suggestion that a risk analysis be undertaken of schools that will receive a reduced budget;
- What measures will be put in place to prevent other schools dropping in attainment;
- How the gap between the performance of girls and boys can be reduced;
- That the School Improvement Team should be enhanced to help provide more support to more schools to improve.

Officers confirmed that phonics programmes were being used in schools and support would be provided to schools to ensure they are being used effectively.

The Director of Children and Adult Services confirmed that improving performance, particularly at Key Stage 2, was one of her key priorities. She felt that good progress had been made this year but was built on very small progress being made in previous years that had caused the positioning of Medway to be so low compared to nationally. She added that there were staff within the local authority, within the schools themselves and Governors that know what is needed to be done to improve, demonstrated by the fact that

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some schools improved by 20-30% from last year's performance and so this needed to be built on and shared.

In relation to school funding reforms officers explained that there would be significant changes to school budgets and consultation was currently being carried out on this issue which was due to be reported to the Schools Forum shortly. There would be some flexibility about how the formula for school budgets are set and there was a commitment that no school would have its budget reduced by more than 1.5% over the first two years. Equally, part of the consultation suggested that increases in budgets be capped by 1.5% also to ensure some equity when the changes are implemented.

In relation to interventions for this year officers confirmed that the School Improvement Team would be working differently this year, working with all schools rather than only the vulnerable, in order to track all schools and avoid any dropping in attainment.

In relation to gender difference, officers explained that it was important teachers were using questioning techniques and targeted work for both genders to keep children of both sexes engaged. There were a number of projects being run and a consultant Headteacher was working with the School Improvement Team to help promote engagement and motivation through creative curriculum.

It was also suggested that the Chairman write to the schools that had made good improvement and elevated from below floor this year, on behalf of the committee, to give credit to the hard work and encourage further progression.

Decision:

- (a) The committee noted the report and requested that a further report providing an analysis of the performance relating to phonics and interventions needed be brought to this committee.
- (b) The committee also recommended that options be considered to enhance the School Improvement Team in order to support more schools in Medway to achieve further progress.

426 Improving performance at Key Stage 2 update on the review by the Effective Challenge of Underperformance Task Group

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Inclusion and Improvement introduced the report and explained that the recommendations were not yet completed but progress had been made against each one.

The committee then asked various questions and made comments which included:-

- Clarification on whether or not it be insisted that the local authority be on the interview panels for the appointment of Deputy Headteachers;

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- Details relating to the Medway Chartered Teacher Award (MCTA);
- Re-appointment of local authority governors;
- Are Headteachers supported in addressing competency issues with staff.

In relation to Deputy Headteacher interviews it was explained that Governors could insist on local authority involvement. With regard to the MCTA officers explained that the scheme had been launched with eligibility criteria and applications had started to be received. In relation to supporting Headteachers in addressing competency issues with their staff officers confirmed that the Human Resources team work very closely with Headteachers on such issues.

In relation to the re-appointment of local authority Governors some of the Council's Group Whips in attendance at the meeting stated that they were concerned about the re-appointment of Governors where they had not been under-going training and would be requesting a meeting with the Head of Governor Services to discuss this issue further.

Decision:

The committee noted the progress made against the recommendations of the task group.

427 Council Plan performance monitoring 2012/2013 - Quarter 1

Discussion:

The Director of Children and Adults introduced the report and highlighted key issues to the committee. She explained that performance indicators (PIs) relating to special educational needs were good. In relation to PIs relating to social care the Director explained that there was beginning to be some improvement in these areas and that the poor performance for this quarter was partly due to addressing a backlog of cases and it was hoped that performance for quarter 2 would demonstrate improvement. In addition, work was being carried out by a Principal Social Worker with the customer contact centre regarding case referrals and another Principal Social Worker was carrying out some work to look at reducing the number of children who were subject to a Child Protection Plan for more than two years. Neither of these pieces of work were ready to be reported back on.

In addition a member raised that at a recent meeting of the Corporate Parenting Group the Director had undertaken to work with other departments and agencies, such as the courts, to see if anything could be done to reduce waiting times and delays. The Director reported that she had met with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care and the Chairman of the Family Justice Board to discuss initial issues and this would be pursued and reported back.

Decision:

The committee noted the report.

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428 Work programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and clarified that it was proposed that a special meeting of the committee be tentatively booked for late February 2013 to consider the proposals relating to the review of overnight short breaks and the closure of Preston Skreens.

Decision:

- (a) The committee agreed the work programme as attached at Appendix 1.
- (b) The committee recommended the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee to add to its work programme an item on transport accessibility for children and young people.
- (c) That a special meeting of this committee be tentatively arranged for late February 2013 to consider the outcome of the consultation and proposed action regarding the review of overnight short breaks/closure of Preston Skreens.

Chairman

Date:

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