

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

**Tuesday, 4 June 2013**

**6.30pm to 9.05pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Baker, Cooper, Craven, Griffin, Hewett, Irvine, Kemp (Vice-Chairman), Purdy, Rodberg, Royle (Chairman), Smith, Turpin and Watson

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

Alex Tear (Church of England Representative)

**Added members without voting rights:**

Adrian Cole (Governor representative)

**Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Osborne (Substitute for Price)

**In Attendance:** Jo Cross, Looked After Children Service Manager  
Hilary Gerhard, Senior Advisor, Inclusion and Diversity  
Jan Guyler, Legal Adviser  
Daniel Kalley, Democratic Services Officer  
Chris McKenzie, Performance Intelligence and Strategic Manager  
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults Services  
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer  
Juliet Sevier, Assistant Director, Inclusion and Improvement  
Andrew Willetts, Action for Families Programme Coordinator

**30 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 26 March 2013 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

**31 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gilry and Price, Jim Grogan (Roman Catholic Church representative), Jane Heyes (Headteacher representative) and Sam Tutt (Medway Youth Parliament representative).

**32 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were none.

**33 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests**

There were none.

**34 Update on Medway's Fostering Service**

**Discussion:**

The Service Manager for Looked After Children (LAC) introduced the report and gave an overview of the range of activities the fostering service team had completed recently. She explained that the service's key aims were to place LAC locally (where it was safe and appropriate to do so) and to place LAC according to their assessed need. The fostering team had an active recruitment plan in place which included: -

- campaigns within Medway, which had resulted in 15 expressions of interest;
- "skills to foster" groups were being run frequently to reduce the time taken to appoint fully qualified carers;
- reviewing the foster carers handbook to using more I.T related programmes;
- a £500 "finders" allowance would be offered to those carers who nominated others to become carers;
- increasing the use of positive media, for example, in the next edition of Medway Matters there was planned to be an interview with a foster carer.

The LAC Service Manager also explained that the Fostering + service was being reviewed to be more effective in supporting carers to work with some of the most challenging young people.

Officers then answered questions from Members, which related to:

- Further work taking place with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), which would offer a range of services and support, including mindfulness training and some evidence based training;
- There had been 3 "skills to foster" group sessions with more planned on a monthly basis. The fostering team had been trying to reduce the time it takes to assess foster carers to around 4 to 6 months. Work had also been done to support new foster carers, providing excellent support and supervision to reduce the number of potential foster carers dropping out;
- Ofsted were expected to change the inspection framework for fostering services and the new framework was awaited. However, issues that had been raised in the previous inspection were still being addressed and the previous Ofsted inspection had helped update the action plan and enabled officers to create evidence files based on the minimum standards expected;
- Benchmarking against similar local authorities had become difficult as other authorities have different setups for their services;
- Although the feedback from young people had been positive the fostering team ensured that any complaints or issues that young people had were

dealt with effectively. Other ways of obtaining feedback from LAC were also being explored, for example, using Independent Reviewing Officers. Officers also undertook to confirm the total number of feedback forms sent to LAC for completion;

- Fostering allowances had been increased in accordance with national guidelines and had taken effect from 1 April 2013;
- The process to recruit for an interim post for six months to support the development of “foster to adopt”, tracking systems and ensuring policies reflect legislation changes and good practice standards was being progressed.
- There were a number of ethnic minorities who are foster carers and a further breakdown on the actual numbers of carers by ethnicity would be provided to Members.
- Although the service would consider looking at increasing the payments offered to foster carers above the national allowance, many foster carers actively choose to work for Medway instead of an independent business.

### **Decision:**

The committee noted the report and requested: -

- 1) a breakdown on the number of foster carers by ethnicity;
- 2) the total number of feedback forms sent to looked after children for completion.

## **35 Review of School Organisation Plan 2011-16**

### **Discussion:**

The Performance, Intelligence and Strategic Planning Manager introduced the report and gave an update on actions against the agreed plan and changes required based on more up to date pupil forecast data that had been collected.

Since the plan was agreed there had been a further increase in the birth rate and an increase of families moving into Medway. Therefore, some of the plans for increased capacity of school places had to be brought forward to accommodate the increased number of primary school age children by expanding provision in schools, including temporarily increasing the capacity at Greenvale Primary School. A new primary school was also due to be opened in Chatham in September 2014.

Officers then answered questions from Members, which related to:

- A commitment being given to actively involve Ward Councillors with any discussions with regards to school places across Medway, and in particular in the Hoo area;
- In terms of the Section 106 agreement funding relating to housing developments on the peninsula that had been assigned for education, members of the committee would be provided with a briefing note showing a breakdown of how the total allocation of funding had been spent;
- Confirmation of the figures relating to actual births in Medway and the net gain in actual pre-school children would be provided to Members;

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- The decision by the Council to close Ridge Meadow Primary School in December 2009 had been due to the pressure placed on local authorities at the time by the previous government to close schools when they had surplus places, which resulted in the local authorities being penalised if action was not taken;
- The issue of over supply of secondary school places was a challenge going forward but the current Government policy was to encourage a market of choice so it was important to manage the tensions until spaces begin to fill, which was expected to be in approximately three years;
- In terms of capacity at early years provision, a balance would need to be struck between the local authority and the private sector, as there would be additional pressure when the local authority becomes statutorily required to provide places for two year olds from 40% of the most deprived families;
- The expansion at Saxon Way Primary School was still planned to go ahead despite it being in the process of becoming an academy;
- The Lodge Hill development had been an ongoing matter due to the delays in its commencement. Any development would however require an increase in school capacity;
- For any new school provision, to develop this as a voluntary aided school, instead of an academy or a free school, would have to be a Cabinet decision;
- Additional places in Chatham/Rochester are being explored to identify suitable solutions should further capacity be required;
- Design work had recently been completed on the Chatham South site for the new primary school and some surplus buildings had been identified, however it would be a Cabinet decision in relation to what should happen to those buildings.

### Decision:

- 1) The Committee recommended the Cabinet to approve the revised action plan taking into account the demographic changes to the population as reflected in forecasts updated in Spring 2011.
- 2) The Committee requested that:
  - A briefing note on the Section 106 agreement funding relating to development on the Peninsula and how it has been spent on education is circulated to Members.
  - Members are updated on exact figures for the graphs showing actual birth figures from 1997 – 2012 and the net gain in actual pre-school age children 2004 to 2012.
  - Any future discussions relating to pupil places involve Ward Councillors.

**36 Medway Action for Families**

**Discussion:**

The Assistant Director, Inclusion and Improvement and the Medway Action for Families (MAfF) Programme Coordinator introduced the report and provided the committee with a presentation, updating Members on the national Troubled Families programme (called MAfF in Medway) and how it was progressing. Officers added that Medway would receive more funding through Payment by Results later in the programme if it could be demonstrated that good outcomes had been achieved. Currently, Medway was being held as an example of best practice nationally in relation to the programme and its effectiveness.

Officers then answered Members questions, which related to: -

- Working with the community and voluntary sector (CVS) which was ongoing and an idea of a CVS pooled resource was being explored;
- Members were recommended to contact the Action for Families Programme Coordinator about any families in particular that they were concerned about within their wards which they felt should be involved in the scheme;
- The programme had strong links with youth centres across Medway and youth workers often played a key role in supporting young people on the programme.

**Decision:**

The committee noted the report.

**37 Improving performance at Key Stage 2**

**Discussion:**

The Assistant Director, Inclusion and Improvement and the Head of School Challenge and Improvement introduced the report that provided an update on progress made with the committee's recommendations from the in-depth review of improving performance at Key Stage 2, which had been agreed by the Cabinet on 17 April 2012. It was highlighted that the changes in reporting of results for 2013 would make comparing the results of last year with this year's more difficult. Officers also highlighted that the number of primary schools in Medway that had been graded good or better for overall effectiveness, leadership and management and in teaching had risen.

Officers then responded to Members questions, which related to: -

- The various methods used for Governor support and training, including the use of the 'Governor Ten' website;
- The concordat, which was being drawn up with the aim of getting it signed up to by all Medway schools, including academies. This was reshaping the terms of engagement and included a commitment by all schools to share data with the local authority;
- A suggestion that governing bodies be provided with an annual attendance record of take up on training and support programmes that have been

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offered to their school by the local authority, which was welcomed by officers;

- Inspectors would be visiting Medway in September 2013 to train local authority and independent nursery providers on ensuring the critical messages regarding teaching phonics at an early age are given;
- 1:1 tuition was provided in a variety of ways but always by a qualified teacher.

The Medway Governors' Association representative added that in response to one of the task group's recommendations, they had worked closely with Medway to develop a data dashboard and were trying to roll out how data was collected in most secondary schools to primary schools to ensure that data obtained was more contemporary.

### **Decision:**

The committee noted the report.

## **38 Work programme**

### **Decision:**

The committee agreed: -

- 1) that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Opposition Spokespersons meet immediately after the next pre-agenda meeting, with the Director of Children and Adults to consider items for scheduling to the 2013-14 committee work programme, and report back to the committee at its July meeting;
- 2) that an all Member briefing be set up regarding how the Council provides support to schools regarding performance;
- 3) that scrutiny of the Medway Safeguarding Children Board is held at the September meeting of the committee;
- 4) that an update on the Health Visiting Service is added to the committee's July meeting agenda.

### **Chairman**

### **Date:**

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