

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

Thursday, 18 September 2014

6.30pm to 9.15pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Baker, Cooper, Craven, Gilry, Pat Gulvin, Iles, Irvine, Kemp (Vice-Chairman), Price, 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), Nathan Lee and Daniel Quirk (Medway Youth Parliament representatives)

In Attendance:

Jan Guyler, Legal Adviser
Diane Elliott, Social Worker - Specialist Children's Services
Justine Henderson, Interim Head of Service, Partnership Commissioning (Children)
Helen Jones, Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning
Chris McKenzie, Performance, Intelligence and Strategic Planning Manager
Donna Mills, Partnership Commissioning Manager
Councillor Mike O'Brien, Lead Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults Services
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer
Andrea Robertson, Team Manager - Specialist Children's Services
Nicola Smith, Democratic Services Officer
Phil Watson, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care

342 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 15 July 2014 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

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343 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Matthew Durcan (Healthwatch Medway representative substitute), Jane Heyes (Headteacher representative), Lauraine McManus (Teacher representative) and Alan Street (Healthwatch Medway representative).

344 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

345 Declarations of interests and whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Pat Gulvin declared a personal interest in any reference to the Medway Youth Offending Team as her brother-in-law was the Team Manager.

Councillor Watson declared a personal interest in item 7 (Private Fostering Arrangements) in relation to any reference to local authority fostering as members of his family were becoming local authority foster carers.

346 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member)

Discussion:

Members received an overview of progress made within the Portfolio for Children Services (Lead Member) over the last year. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), Councillor O'Brien, responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Increasing capacity of school places.** A Member raised concern that too many additional places were being planned for in under performing schools and asked that before permanent provision was put in place, clear evidence of sustained improvement should be demonstrated. The Portfolio Holder explained that Headteachers and Governors were working hard with the School Improvement Team to achieve some sustained improvement in our schools and referred to the report on the School Organisation Plan which the committee would be considering later in the meeting.
- **Location of detached youth workers on peninsula.** A Member referred to two detached youth workers who had recently been moved from the Strood Youth Centre and asked where they would be relocated to, suggesting Hoo Library as an alternative. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the youth workers had had to vacate Strood Youth Centre as the Youth

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Offending Team had been moved to the site and he was happy to explore with officers alternative provision for the youth workers.

- **Organisational Change Department.** A Member sought clarification of this role and what progress was being made in relation to achieving a sustainable work force. The Lead Member explained that the department helped to manage and ensure that adequate numbers of full time staff were employed. This had been a challenge but more newly qualified social workers had been recruited and the workforce was beginning to stabilise. Relocating social care staff so that they were all located together at MHS Broadside had been a real improvement and had enabled the staff to work in a more cohesive and professional way.
- **New protocol for 'missing persons'.** It was requested that the new protocol was shared with Committee Members.
- **Apprenticeships for young people with learning difficulties.** More detail around the numbers of young people benefiting from such schemes was requested. The Director of Children and Adults confirmed that there were two types of apprenticeship schemes. One was that any large contract let by Medway Council should include apprenticeship schemes. Two Looked After Children had secured placements. The other was apprenticeship placements for young people with learning difficulties and six young people had secured this type of scheme in Medway.
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.** In response to a comment, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that work was continuing to achieve a single point of access and this was progressing positively.
- **Child sexual exploitation.** In response to a question about what Medway was doing in relation to this issue the Portfolio Holder confirmed that there was a partnership approach to this, through the Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) and that much work had been done. A Member Briefing session had been held prior to this meeting, which had given detail on this and the Portfolio Holder requested officers to re-run that training at a later time to enable Members that work to attend and to circulate the presentation and handouts to all Members.
- **Key Stage 2 performance.** The Portfolio Holder explained that the provisional data for Key Stage 2 had demonstrated an improvement in performance in this area and thanked school leadership teams, pupils and the School Improvement Team for this.
- **Home to School Transport.** Members raised their concerns regarding the current policy and requested the Portfolio Holder to consider a change so that girls from the Hoo Peninsula area who were attending grammar schools could be entitled to free home to school transport to both Fort Pitt Grammar School and Rochester Grammar School for Girls. The current policy only entitled them to free transport to Fort Pitt, as this was the nearest grammar

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school in distance. The Portfolio Holder confirmed his intention to consider a review of the policy in the future and that if the policy were to be reviewed it would be a Cabinet decision.

Decision:

The committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member) for his attendance and recommended that he and officers consider the possibility of a review of the Home to School Transport Policy being undertaken.

347 Short Break Review and Policy

Discussion:

The Assistant Director Partnership Commissioning and the Interim Head of Service, Partnership and Commissioning (Children) introduced the report, which provided an overview of the key findings and recommendations following a review of short breaks. The draft policy presented to the committee had been prepared to ensure children, young people and their families are at the heart of the service, that they are well informed of services available, that they are able to purchase services through personal budgets should they wish and that there is appropriate and sufficient range of services. Officers also wanted to ensure that there was a clear assessment of need undertaken for each family and they were working closely with providers to ensure that needs of individual families could be met and a range of support options could be delivered.

Members then asked questions and made comments including the following:

- **Timeframe and impact on families.** Concern was raised on the time this review had taken and the impact this was having on families that relied on short breaks. Officers explained that they were working hard to establish a framework of options and were looking to tender for services in the next few months. In addition, provision at Aut Even had been substantially increased and the age range able to access the Napier unit had been lowered. There had also been very positive feedback from users of Dragon's Retreat, a provision based in Kent. Officers also undertook to report back on whether there was a waiting list for the services at Aut Even, following a request from a Member.
- **Personal budgets.** Members raised concern that personal budgets may not be suitable for all families. Officers clarified that having a personal budget would be a family's choice and they wouldn't have to access services using a personal budget should they not wish to. It was simply an option for families so that they could purchase services that most suited their specific needs by accessing a more diverse range of support services.
- **Use of Common Assessment Framework forms (CAFs).** Concern was raised by a Member that the policy proposed families to be assessed for short breaks provision through the Education, Health and Care planning

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process or CAF. They felt that the CAF process was not adequately performing to manage this additional aspect. Officers explained that they had not wanted to introduce an additional assessment for families who already have to repeat their story in several ways. In relation to CAF they explained that it was being developed to be more user friendly and more focussed on the child's and family's needs. There had been a dramatic rise in the number of CAFs held in Medway and the team supporting CAF had been integrated in the Early Help service with agencies better supporting its use which would improve the CAF performance and role across Medway. Officers undertook to bring a report on the new Early Help Service, including CAF, to a future meeting of the committee.

- **Impact on families currently accessing services.** Concern was raised that the diversity impact assessment at appendix 2 of the report noted that the impact of all families being assessed and services being more equally and fairly distributed was that some families currently accessing services may no longer receive them. Members wanted to know how such families would be supported. In response officers confirmed that they did not want to disadvantage any family and would be working better with universal services to enable children and young people to access such services, which in the feedback from children and young people, they wanted to do so they can use services that their peers use. Officers also undertook to report back to the committee on the local offer, which would demonstrate a tiered approach to support for families. Members welcomed this but also requested assurance that there would be a phased transition of the new service delivery to support affected families to adjust to any changes.

Decision:

The committee:

- (a) Recommended the Cabinet to approve the Short Break Review and Policy for Disabled Children and Young People in Medway 2014-19 and to request that it include more detail with regards to phased transition of the new policy to mitigate any families from abrupt changes in services they receive.
- (b) Requested that a report on Early Help Services, including the Common Assessment Framework be added to the work programme.
- (c) Requested that a report on the local offer, demonstrating a tiered approach to support services, be added to the work programme.

348 Private Fostering Arrangements

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and representatives from the Specialist Children's Services Team introduced the report, which provided the committee with an update on work in relation to private fostering arrangements,

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including work with young people and with partners to appraise them of their roles and responsibilities in relation to young people who may be privately fostered. Officers updated the committee that there were now 22 young people in private fostering arrangements in Medway and this large rise since the report was published had been due to some language students coming into the area because if they were staying for more than 28 days then they qualified as a private fostering arrangement.

Members then asked questions and made comments including the following:

- **Length of time in arrangements.** In response to a question officers confirmed that private fostering should be viewed as short-term arrangements. Annual reviews were conducted where arrangements were longer term and if appropriate then officers secure an order for that child to remain within that arrangement.
- **Process if a placement is found to be unsuitable.** In response to a question officers confirmed that in the first instance the child would be returned to their family home. If that was not possible and they were unable to stay with an alternative family member then the child would be accommodated with a local authority foster carer.
- **Notifications of arrangements.** Officers confirmed that most notifications came from Social Care and schools but also midwives, health visitors, carers or children themselves.
- **Trafficking.** In response to a question about checking whether a young person was in fact a victim of trafficking, officers explained that when the young person had travelled from another country they would request to see details of parental consent, travel arrangements, immigration documents, passports and birth certificates. They would also request contact details of parents so they could check with them that they were aware of the arrangement and would carry out checks with immigration. If this information was not forthcoming then the case would be referred to Child Protection.

Decision:

The committee noted the report.

349 New Ofsted Single Framework

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning introduced the report which provided information about the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF) for Children's Services, which had been in place from November 2013, and the Multi-Agency Framework which was currently out for consultation and was due to be implemented in April 2015. Officers confirmed that the Local Government

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Association (LGA) peer review of the Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) had now been ratified by the Chair of the MSCB and a provisional date had been set in January.

Members then asked questions and made comments including the following:

- **Co-ordination of work between the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Corporate Parenting Board and this committee.** A Member suggested that ways to do this should be explored in order to avoid duplication and to work more effectively. Officers explained that following the peer review that had taken place a protocol about shared roles and responsibilities had been developed. This had been endorsed by the Medway Safeguarding Children Board, the Medway Children's Action Network (CAN) and the Adult Safeguarding Board and would be circulated to the committee. It was also suggested that Medway CAN should be invited to a future meeting of the committee in order to understand roles and align work with overview and scrutiny.
- **Learning from other SIFs inspections on other local authorities.** The Director of Children and Adult Services explained that there was a very collective approach amongst Directors of Children Services across local authorities with sharing their own experiences.

Decision:

The committee noted the report and requested that the Medway CAN be invited to a future meeting of the committee, following its formal launch.

350 2014 Review of the School Organisation Plan 2011-2016

Discussion:

The Performance, Intelligence and Strategic Planning Manager introduced the report which detailed suggested amendments to the School Organisation Plan 2011-16 following an annual review. He reported that in September 2014 an additional 226 Reception Year places had been added to Medway primary schools to respond to an increase in growth from birth rates and inward migration and forecasts demonstrated that this rise was expected to continue. Officers were therefore also anticipating an increased demand in secondary school places in the long term and some discussions were already taking place with Medway secondary schools in relation to this.

Members asked questions and made comments including the following:

- **Housing developments within neighbouring local authorities (LAs).** A Member asked whether forecasts took into account additional houses planned within neighbouring LAs that would impact on school places within Medway. Officers confirmed that they worked with colleagues from Kent County Council to keep each other informed of such developments that could affect school places across the borders so that this information could

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be built into forecasting.

- **Expansion of places within Hoo Peninsula.** Members welcomed the plans to create an all-through academy on the Hundred of Hoo site but raised concern that a particular developer was claiming to be funding this expansion on the back of a future development and sought clarification as to whether this was the case. Officers confirmed that the expansion was to meet the additional need already existing within the Hoo peninsula area and was not reliant on the possible future development referred to. The Director of Children and Adults undertook to discuss the issue of the developer's claims with the Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture.
- **Expansion of good schools.** A Member raised concern that permanent expansion should not be undertaken at schools that had performance issues until there was evidence of sustained improvement and added that ideally, schools considered by Ofsted as 'good' should be expanded initially, where possible. Officers confirmed that this was a view shared with them and temporary accommodation was used to expand schools in the first instance where possible so that a clear trajectory of improved performance could be ensured as well as a sustained demand for places.
- **Relocation of Rivermead.** A Member asked for clarification about the impact on the contract between Medway Norse and Rivermead for SEN Transport when it relocates to the current Abbey Court primary provision site and also whether the school would move in its entirety to the new site. Officers confirmed that the contract was with the school and would move with the school when it relocates. Officers also confirmed that the school would eventually be based across its original site and the new site with the new site being used for primary age pupils and potentially years 7 and 8 and then the older year groups continuing to be based at the current Forge Lane site.

Decision:

The committee recommended the 2014 review and update of the School Organisation Plan 2011-16 to the Cabinet for approval.

351 Council Plan Performance Monitoring 2014-2015

Discussion:

The Director of Children and Adults Services introduced the report which provided a summary of Medway's performance for Quarter 1 2014/15 against its priorities, as set out in the Council Plan 2013/15, where relevant to this committee. It was explained that lots of work had been undertaken to improve the voice of the child and a particularly well performing area was the work in relation to Medway Action for Families. Some improvements had been made in social care, such as changes to the 'front door' service of social care referrals and it was envisaged that these improvements would begin to show

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improvements in performance around children social care indicators. The External Improvement Board continued to oversee the progress being made against the Children's Improvement Plan and the Board considered Medway to be improving at the right trajectory.

Members then asked questions and made comments including the following:

- **Performance relating to children social care.** In response to the concern raised that a number of the social care indicators were below target, the Assistant Director, Children's Social Care, reiterated that improvements had been made to services which would improve performance once new systems had embedded. For example, the new Children Advice and Duty Service (CADS) which ensured assessments were only undertaken on referrals where it was necessary to enable these to be done within timescales but added that Medway still had a 'never do nothing' approach and so referred other referrals not requiring formal assessment to Early Help for further support services. In addition there had been a significant rise in the number of children on a Child Protection Plan, which had impacted on capacity of social care colleagues.
- **Support provided to Medway Youth Parliament (MYP).** The MYP representatives raised concerns regarding staff restructures and how this would impact on the level of support that MYP currently receives. In response, the Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning explained that a workshop would be arranged for the Youth Service, MYP, Young Commissioners, Young Inspectors and the Children in Care Council to discuss what support could be provided for young people.
- **Permanent exclusion rates (CA13).** A Member asked if more schools becoming academies had impacted on permanent exclusion rates and what performance was like at Medway's Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). The Director of Children and Adult Services explained that some schools were feeling a pressure to be less inclusive under the new Ofsted regime. She added that officers were currently looking at out of school provision, especially for years 10 and 11 and active discussions were taking place with secondary school headteachers and the PRUs to find ways of strengthening provision further.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

352 Work programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and reiterated the additions to the work programme that had been added during the meeting, which were: -

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- Early Help Service, including Common Assessment Frameworks
- Local Offer
- Medway Children's Action Network.

It was also confirmed that an outstanding briefing note on the status of Medway schools would be circulated in the next few days to the committee.

Decision:

The committee:

- (a) agreed the work programme as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the additions outlined above being added.
- (b) Noted that expressions of interest for the two parent governor representative vacancies on this committee were invited at the start of the new school term in September 2014.

Chairman

Date:

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