

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

**Tuesday, 9 December 2014**

**6.30pm to 8.40pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Cooper, Gilry, Pat Gulvin, Iles, Kemp (Vice-Chairman), Mason, Price, Purdy, Royle (Chairman), Smith and Wicks

**Added members without voting rights:**

Adrian Cole (Governor representative), Alan Street (Healthwatch Medway CIC representative), Nathan Lee (Youth Parliament representative), Daniel Quirk (Medway Youth Parliament representative) and Karen White (Substitute - Headteacher representative)

**Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Griffin (Substitute for Turpin)

**In Attendance:** Hilary Gerhard, Senior Advisor, Inclusion and Diversity  
Keith Gulvin, Youth Offending Team Manager  
Jan Guylar, Legal Adviser  
Chris McKenzie, Performance, Intelligence and Strategic Planning Manager  
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults Services  
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer  
Councillor Kelly Tolhurst, Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement  
Phil Watts, Chief Finance Officer Designate

**571 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 18 September 2014 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

**572 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Baker, Craven and Turpin and from Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church representative) and Alex Tear (Church of England representative).

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### 573 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

The Chairman announced that Jane Heyes had resigned from the committee as the Headteacher representative.

### 574 Declarations of interests and whipping

#### Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

#### Other interests

Councillor Pat Gulvin declared a personal interest in item 8 (Youth Justice Plan) in that the Youth Offending Team Manager was her brother-in-law.

### 575 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement

Members received an overview of progress on the area within the terms of reference of this Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement, as set out below:

- Review of the Council's approach and support for school effectiveness
- Support for School Governors
- Post Ofsted Advisory Group
- And any other additional key strands of work as agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member) to respond to emerging issues.

The Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement, Councillor Tolhurst, then responded to Members' questions and comments as follows: -

- **Impact of the role of the Portfolio Holder** – in response to a question about what impact the role of the Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement had had and how Councillor Tolhurst carries out that role she explained that, in relation to Key Stage 2, although Medway was still 4% below the national average the results had been the best results ever achieved in Medway and were a 3% improvement on the previous year. In addition, less schools were below the floor targets despite the targets being raised since the previous year. She explained that this area was an ongoing challenge and further improvement was needed but that steady sustainable progress had been demonstrated. In terms of her role she explained that she had regular dialogue with the School Improvement Team, Headteachers, Governors and parents and ensured that she was clear what the authority is delivering.
- **Leadership** – The Portfolio Holder confirmed that strong effective leadership was key and remained a local authority priority. There was a need to positively champion improvement collectively and celebrate achievement. In addition she highlighted some ways of strengthening

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governance, for example; improving governor training attendance which had risen to 74% from 53%, the development of a clerking service which could be brokered from schools to strengthen the role of governing body clerks, and brokering secondments from outstanding schools outside of the area to support Medway schools to improve.

- **Draft School Improvement Strategy** – The Portfolio Holder referred to the draft strategy appended to the report on test and examination results on the agenda and welcomed the strategy which she felt was clear, realistic, aspirational and set out the vision for Medway's primary schools for the next two years.
- **Recruitment** – with reference to the current vacancy of the Assistant Director, School Effectiveness and Inclusion, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that there was no update on this at present but praised the work of the interim Assistant Director. She added that recruitment generally was an issue as there was difficulty in recruiting teaching staff in Medway schools and reiterated the importance of positively championing improvement to encourage teachers to want to work in Medway schools.
- **Key Stage 2** – in response to a question about why Key Stage 2 was still under performing compared to the good results achieved at other Key Stages, the Portfolio Holder reiterated that steady progress with Key Stage 2 had been made and that some schools had made significant progress, however, more work needed to be done to close the gap between Medway's performance and the national average.
- **Governor recruitment** – In response to a question about how Medway can encourage the local community to become governors the Portfolio Holder confirmed that it is a role that requires dedicated and commitment but also gives people the opportunity to make a difference and have a real impact on their local community. She added that support from Governor Services was strong with 86% of Medway schools buying into the service, which was helping to support new and existing Governors in their role.
- **Exclusions** – Reference was made to exclusion and what happens to those children and young people who are excluded in terms of their education. The Portfolio Holder explained that when a child or young person is excluded, they are required to be provided with an alternative education provision and officers work closely with schools to ensure children and young people who do display challenging behaviour and have been or are at risk of being excluded are supported to maintain in an appropriate school setting. The Portfolio Holder also undertook to ensure the committee were provided with details about exclusions in Medway.

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- **Working with academies** – a Member asked how the Portfolio Holder and the local authority worked with academies to improve performance. The Portfolio Holder responded that although academies were not required to work with the local authority, Medway did benefit from good working relationships between the Council and academies. If an academy were not to improve and were to cause concern then the local authority would be required to flag those concerns with the Department for Education who would need to investigate and take action.
- **Governance of Governing Bodies** – In response to a question as to whether a policy could be produced to demonstrate how Governing Body governance should be carried out the Portfolio Holder explained that academies were entitled and able to set the governance arrangements of their school as they wished and therefore this was not possible to do.
- **Children educated at home** – the Portfolio Holder confirmed that children that are educated at home were monitored by the local authority.

### Decision:

The committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for her attendance.

## 576 Provisional Test and Examination Results for 2014

### Discussion:

Officers introduced the report which provided the committee with the provisional test and examination results for Medway in 2014. The results were currently still provisional but the committee was advised that the validated Key Stage 2 results would be published later in the week.

Officers then responded to the Members questions and comments, which included: -

- **Validated results** – Members requested that a briefing note be provided with the detail of these results, by school if possible, in order for Members to be able to support schools in their wards where necessary.
- **Governors hub** – Members supported the Governors hub, which provided a range of support mechanisms for Governors and enabled Headteachers to share documents with Governors at an earlier opportunity. Officers confirmed that they were encouraging all Medway schools to buy into the hub service as the feedback from users had been extremely positive.
- **Draft School Improvement Strategy** – when asked to enlarge on how the local authority will continue to support Medway schools, as detailed in the draft strategy appended to the report, the Director of Children and

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Adults explained that a policy of positively championing improvement was being carried out. She acknowledged that the school community all had the same priority – to provide Medway’s children and young people with the best education possible. Where schools are judged by Ofsted as inadequate she explained that it was expected for that school to become sponsored by a good or outstanding school or academy trust, which then added capacity to enable rapid improvement and there were examples around Medway of this method working.

- **Raising achievement meetings** – in response to a question about how these meetings work, officers confirmed that they were a partnership between a school and the local authority and were an opportunity to take stock on performance and self evaluate. They celebrate what is working well and then identify what is needed to achieve the journey to good or outstanding, with targeted support provided where needed.
- **Gaining support from the local community** – a Member provided an example from a local school that had approached churches and mosques to volunteer at the school to read with pupils, which had been very successful.

### **Decision:**

The committee noted the report.

### **577 Outcome of Consultation for the Proposed Prescribed Alterations at Rivermead Special School**

#### **Discussion:**

The Head of Performance and Strategic Planning introduced the report which provided the committee with the outcome of the informal consultation on the proposals to increase the pupil numbers, extend onto an additional site and alter the upper age limit at Rivermead Special School.

The committee supported the proposals.

#### **Decision:**

The committee recommended the Cabinet to progress the proposals relating to Rivermead Special School to the Statutory Representation stage.

### **578 Youth Justice Plan (Policy Framework)**

#### **Discussion:**

The Youth Offending Team (YOT) Manager introduced the report to the committee, which set out the Youth Justice Plan re-draft for 2014-16. It had been developed following discussions with partner agencies via the YOT

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Management Board and a provisional version had been submitted to the Youth Justice Board which had responded favourably.

Members then asked officers questions, which included: -

- **Transition from youth offending to adult services** and how this was working. The YOT Manager explained that Medway had been leading on some work around transition via a working party of the Kent and Medway Reducing Reoffending Board, which had recently been re-established to look at how transition can best be managed. The working party was currently looking at a 6 month tapering of support so that Adult Services could work with children services three months before and three months after the young person becomes 18 years old.
- **An update on the mindfulness training.** The YOT Manager explained that staff were continuing their mindfulness training and that the Medway YOT was the first YOT to adopt this approach and were working with schools, such as Silverbank Pupil Referral Unit, to deliver mindfulness workshops to pupils there.
- **Work with Medway Action for Families (MAfF) helped with transition.** In response to a question on how working with the MAfF Team had helped the work of the YOT, the YOT Manager explained that the teams had been working closely, with two YOT staff Members being dedicated to working on this project. Furthermore, he added that YOT had invested half a full time equivalent post to provide functional family therapy (FFT). Early evidence had demonstrated that reoffending of young people from families who received support under MAfF had reduced by 50% and where FFT had also been provided, reoffending had reduced by 60%.
- **Review of the move to Strood.** The YOT Manager explained that the move itself had been very efficient, being completed two days before deadline and service downtime had been less than two working days. The move had enabled a much more integrated approach with the Youth Service and owing to the premises being smaller the YOT were now holding appointments in hubs within neighbourhoods making the service more local to the user, which had proved successful.
- **Representation on the YOT Management Board.** In response to a question as to whether a representative from private sector housing should be included, the YOT Manager explained that because private sector housing was so large and diverse it would be difficult to be representational and as the majority of youth offenders were placed via the Council's Housing Services, who were represented on the Board, it was not considered necessary to include a private sector housing representative at this point.

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- **Preventing looked after children from becoming criminalised.** Following a request for an update on this issue, the YOT Manager confirmed that this was an area of concern with around one third of young people involved with the YOT being looked after. The YOT was about to launch a protocol so that when a report was made about a Looked After Child, unless the incident was of a serious nature, the Police would instead refer to the YOT who would then carry out restorative justice methods to attempt to resolve issues
- **Managing further possible budgetary cuts.** In response to a question about how the service would accommodate any possible further cuts to budgets, the YOT Manager explained that a number of efficiency measures had already been made, for example the move to Strood, however, further cuts would require a need to safeguard statutory functions by reducing levels of preventative work. He explained that this would have potential implications in terms of increased statutory work levels.
- **Monitoring extremism.** When asked whether the YOT monitored any signs of extremism, the YOT Manager explained that Medway YOT had run a programme for two years, which did work on this issue and although this programme had now ended due to the funding ending, the service was benefiting from the expertise gained from this project. Plus, the YOT worked closely with Police in sharing information and intelligence and also worked with local mosques.

### Decision

The committee recommended the Cabinet and Full Council to approve the Youth Justice Plan re-draft 2014-16.

### 579 Capital and Revenue Budget 2015/16

#### Discussion:

The Head of Finance Strategy introduced the report which presented the draft capital and revenue budgets for 2015/16. He explained that for 2014/15 there was a forecast overspend of £4.5 million, which was largely due to pressures in children's social care. He then explained to the committee the process of building the draft capital and revenue budgets, adding that there was still a gap of £12m to close for 2015/16.

In relation to the spending pressures relating to children's social care, some of which was attributable to difficulties in recruitment of social workers, which had created a reliance on agency staff, a Member asked why agencies were able to recruit social workers when the local authority were having difficulty in doing so. In response the Director for Children and Adults explained that recruitment had been a challenge, particularly in relation to first line management posts and this was a problem shared with local authorities up and down the country, however, the situation had improved over the past 15 months. Retention of permanent

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staff had improved with the turnover rate of staff in children's social care now being low. The authority was being creative in terms of recruitment of social workers, approaching other countries where there was equivalency in standards of training and in driving down, where possible, the costs of agency staff.

### **Decision:**

The committee noted the report and the draft capital and revenue budgets for 2015/16.

## **580 Council Plan Monitoring - Quarter 2**

### **Discussion:**

The Director of Children and Adults introduced the report and focussed on the improvement journey in relation to children's social care. She reported that steady progress was being made with a number of external assessments to challenge the progress journey and all were consistently reporting that significant improvement is being made on work with Medway's most vulnerable children. In relation to specific targets she explained that: -

- NI 147 (care leavers in suitable accommodation) – this was an area that the current Support for Care Leavers Task Group had been focussing on but she explained that, although a very important indicator, it related to a small number of young people, a total of 13 for this quarter.
- A1 (average time between a child entering care and moving in with adoptive family) – the number of children being placed for adoption was relatively high but this was not always done within the timescales. However the service were happy that they were delivering a child focussed service. In addition, this was a rolling three year cumulative target so there was a possibility this indicator would take some time to improve.

In response to a question requesting details about kinship adoptions the Director explained that this may not be easy to provide as data was not collected in this way but offered to bring an item providing more detail about this issue at a future meeting of the committee. The Chairman suggested that this be added to the work programme for the March meeting of the committee.

### **Decision:**

The committee noted the report and requested that a report on permanency options for children that are looked after be brought to the March 2015 meeting of this committee.

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**581 Work Programme**

**Discussion:**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and notified the committee of the following addition to the Cabinet Forward Plan:

Gateway 1 Procurement Commencement: Short breaks for disabled children and their carers, which was added to the 16 December 2014 Cabinet meeting.

**Decision:**

The committee: -

- (1) agreed the work programme at Appendix 1, subject to the items listed as 'date to be determined' being added to the meeting scheduled for 25 March 2015;
- (2) noted that no nominations for the two Parent Governor representative vacancies were received and that the recruitment process would therefore be repeated in six months time;
- (3) agreed that a submission for the CQC inspection of the Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust be prepared by the Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning, in consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Opposition Spokespersons.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

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