

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

**Tuesday, 19 January 2016**

**6.30pm to 9.40pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Avey, Cooper, Fearn, Franklin, Hall, Johnson, Opara, Price, Potter, Purdy, Royle (Chairman), Tranter, Wicks (Vice-Chairman) and Williams

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

Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church representative)

**Added members without voting rights:**

Cath Foad (Healthwatch Medway CIC Representative), Peter Martin (Governor representative), Philip McCue (Medway Youth Parliament), Lauraine McManus (Teacher representative) and James Peck (Medway Youth Parliament)

**In Attendance:**

Dr Alison Barnett, Director of Public Health  
Paul Clarke, School Organisation Officer, School Organisation Officer  
Ann Domeney, Interim Assistant Director, Children's Social Care  
David Dowie, Integrated Youth Support Services Manager  
Jan Guyler, Head of Legal Services/Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Mark Holmes, Head of Early Years  
Joanne Kavanagh, Leaving Care Team Manager  
Pauline Maddison, Assistant Director (Interim), School Effectiveness and Inclusion  
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults Services  
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer  
Ian Sutherland, Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services

**629 Apologies for absence**

An apology for absence was received from Alex Tear (Church of England representative).

**630 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 8 December 2015 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19 January 2016

### 631 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

The Chairman confirmed that he had accepted two reports as urgent. Item 11 (Call-in: Review of Early Years and Sure Start Children's Centre Services) was accepted as urgent given the intention to consult on the proposals and for the results to be reported back to Cabinet on 5 April 2016 and to enable full implementation by 1 January 2017. The report could not be despatched with the agenda as the decisions were called in following the Cabinet meeting held on 12 January 2016, after the despatch of the agenda. Item 12 (Call in: Future Integrated Youth Service Delivery) was also accepted by the Chairman as urgent given the procurement timeline set out in the Cabinet report. The report could not be despatched with the agenda as the decisions were called in following the Cabinet meeting held on 12 January 2016, after the despatch of the agenda.

### 632 Declarations of interests and whipping

#### Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

#### Other interests

The Chairman declared an interest on behalf of any Member appointed by the Council to a Youth Centre Management Committee in relation to item 12 (Call in: Future Integrated Youth Service Delivery).

### 633 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman informed Members that he proposed for the Committee to consider items 11 (Call in: Review of Early Years and Sure Start Children's Centre Services) and 12 (Call in: Future Integrated Youth Service Delivery) first at the meeting.

Later in the meeting the Chairman also agreed to bring forward the consideration of item 8 (Support for Care Leavers: Progress report) and this item was discussed immediately after the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services was held to account.

### 634 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services

#### **Discussion:**

Members received an overview of progress on the area within the terms of reference of this Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services, which related to the Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Service.

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19 January 2016

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Services responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Recruitment** – in response to a question about whether the new recruits referred to within the report had started, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that contracts were being finalised and they were hoped to be in post imminently. It was confirmed that the figure quoted in the report of 49% permanent staff did include these new appointments and he added that Medway was doing its best to recruit more people which the Council could then support and develop and would continue to work hard with advertising campaigns.
- **Evaluation of the Conference Centre and the Strengthening Families model** – in response to a question about whether the further evaluation of these, which was due to take place in Summer 2016, would be reported to the Committee, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that this would be possible.
- **Rise in children subject to Child Protection (CP) Plans or becoming looked after** – in response to a question about the rise in these numbers the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the numbers had instead been expected to plateau but it was explained that with changes to the front door service, along with strengthening of the Family Intensive Support Service and Specialist Multi Agency Response Team, it was hoped this would stabilise the increase. Officers added that some analysis of the rise was ongoing and one factor related to Medway having large sibling groups
- **Advocacy service** – a comment was made celebrating the advocacy service which had been commissioned to increase the active face to face participation of young people within Child Protection Conferences.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the report and the responses provided from the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services.

## 635 Annual Public Health Report of the Director of Public Health 2014/15

### Discussion:

The Director of Public Health introduced the report and provided a presentation to the Committee which outlined the key aspects within the Annual Public Health Report 2014/15.

Members then raised a number of points and questions which included: -

- **Breastfeeding** – in response to a question about how Public Health was working with local businesses to become 'breastfeeding friendly' the Director of Public Health confirmed that this was an important factor and confirmed the service did work with local businesses on how they can make

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19 January 2016

public places more accessible for breastfeeding and added that this was an issue that needed to be promoted on a universal basis.

- **E-cigarettes** – in response to a question about whether children could be prevented from entering a store selling e-cigarettes, the Director of Public Health confirmed that there was no legislation to enable this but added that, following European legislation, strict restrictions on advertising e-cigarettes would be implemented in the coming months.
- **Immunisations** – in response to a question relating to how the reporting of immunisation uptake could be improved, the Director of Public Health explained that she had raised this issue formally with NHS England who were procuring software that would enable accurate reporting of immunisation uptake in general practices and it was hoped this software would soon be in place.
- **Smoking in pregnancy** – in response to a question about how smoking in pregnancy was recorded, the Director of Public Health confirmed that mothers were asked if they were smoking when in labour by their midwife, which was not always the most appropriate moment to source the information and therefore the possibility of moving the measure to recording at the standard 36 week check was being explored. She also confirmed when asked that Medway's Public Health Team had not run a voucher incentive scheme used in other areas. There was insufficient evidence to demonstrate how effective this had been long term and it was felt more important to concentrate on all health care staff being equipped to encourage and motivate women to quit and understand the health risks of continuing to smoke.
- **Teenage pregnancy and education in schools** – in response to a question about how effective sexual education in schools was to prevent teenage pregnancies, the Director of Public Health confirmed that the service's work on developing accredited relationship and sex education resources and training for schools was innovative and had been identified as good practice. She added that a quality assurance process was in place which included observation of initial lessons on sexual education.
- **Smoking cessation shop in Chatham town centre** – in response to a question about how effective this had been, the Director of Public Health explained that it was too early to provide any analysis but the footfall into the store had been good and the perception was that it was attracting passers by who Public Health would otherwise have had no engagement with about support for quitting smoking.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

**636 Outcomes of Consultation for the Proposed Prescribed Alterations at Bligh Infant and Junior Schools**

**Discussion:**

The School Organisation and Capital Programme Manager introduced the report which outlined the outcome of the informal consultation period on the Council's proposals to enlarge the premises at Bligh Infant and Junior Schools, by way of statutory prescribed alterations.

In response to a question about why the level of feedback had been so low, the School Organisation and Capital Programme Manager explained that this was common for consultations which related to relatively non-controversial proposals. Due to Bligh Infants and Junior Schools being outstanding and good schools respectively, there had been little objection to the proposals for expansion, except those concerns relating to parking and road safety, which would be considered as part of the design.

**Decision:**

The Committee noted the report and recommended the Cabinet to progress the proposals further.

**637 Support for Care Leavers Task Group: Progress Report**

**Discussion:**

The Director of Children and Adult Services and the Leaving Care Team Manager introduced the report which provided the Committee with a summary of the progress made against the recommendations. It was explained that in the Council's recent Ofsted inspection into Children's Social Care, services for care leavers had been graded as 'good' and thanks for this were given to the Leaving Care Team Manager and the Support for Care Leavers Task Group for its work and contribution.

Members of the Committee congratulated officers for the progress made and the achievements of the Leaving Care Service. Members then raised the following points and questions, which included:

- **Your Choice in Medway** – one Member alerted officers that an old version of the Your Choice in Medway Guide was still available on the website which detailed historic information and officers undertook to address this.
- **Mentoring scheme** – in relation to recommendation 14, which related to the potential commissioning of a mentoring scheme, a member asked for more information on this being actioned. Officers explained that this would still be explored and added that some young people had already indicated their interest in becoming mentors.

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19 January 2016

- **Care Leavers in education, employment or training (EET)** – in response to a question about the gap between the percentage of care leavers in EET, which was 47%, and the target of 55%, officers explained that these figures related to a group of very vulnerable young people who were often very disadvantaged. They added that if figures did not include care leavers who were young parents, in custody or able to claim Employment and Support Allowance due to illness, the figure would be around 70%. It was also commented that a number of Care Leavers had returned to the service and had gone on to university or college late, beyond the age of 21 and these young people were not included in the EET figures due to their age.
- **Care Leavers in custody** – in response to a question about how care leavers in custody are supported, officers explained that their Personal Advisor visits them a minimum of once every eight weeks. When they come towards the end of their custodial sentence, work was done to ensure a package of support was available. The Leaving Care Service worked with the Princes Trust Talent Match Programme, which helps young people aged 18-24 who have been out of work for more than 12 months. They also work to secure appropriate accommodation to ensure it is ready for their release. The team were also working to improve communication and information sharing with the Probation Service to help with tracking young people.
- **Links with Care Leavers and Medway Youth Parliament (MYP)** – in response to a question it was confirmed that Care Leavers had previously been members of MYP and MYP also had links with the Children in Care Council. Officers added that there was also a Leaving Care Consultation Group, which was able to provide feedback and participate in shaping and improving the service.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report and thanked the Leaving Care Team Manager for her work in achieving the 'good' rating for services to care leavers in the recent Ofsted inspection.

## **638 Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care Services**

### **Discussion:**

The Director of Children and Adult Services introduced the report which summarised the findings of the recent Ofsted inspection of children's safeguarding and services for looked after children in Medway. She explained that the local authority had received a formal notice to improve in 2013 following two 'inadequate' ratings under previous inspection frameworks. The 2015 inspection had been under the Single Inspection Framework which had more challenging thresholds and the Council had received an overall grade of 'require improvement to be good'.

## **Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19 January 2016**

The Director explained that the inspection had identified 13 specific actions and the local authority was now developing its action plan which would be signed off by the External Improvement Board at its last meeting in February 2016, before submission to Ofsted, for which the deadline was 8 March 2016. She also reported that the formal notice to improve had been lifted by the Department for Education.

Members welcomed the improvement in children's social care and congratulated staff. Concern was raised about the impact financial pressures could have on continued improvement. The Director confirmed that the Council was continuing to strive to achieve an overall grading of 'good' in the next two years.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

### **639 Work programme**

#### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed the work programme as set out at Appendix 1, subject to the items scheduled for 3 March 2016 meeting on Integrated Family Support Services and Medway Safeguarding Children Board being deferred to the following meeting.

### **640 Call in: Review of Early Years and Sure Start Children's Centre Services**

#### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report regarding a call-in received from six Members of the Council of a Cabinet decision (2/2016) to commence consultation on reconfiguring services, including the proposal for significant changes to the management and staffing of Medway's 19 Sure Start Children's Centres, and a reorganisation of the authority's early years services. The Committee was requested to consider the Cabinet decision and decide either to take no further action or to refer the decision back to Cabinet for reconsideration. An addendum report was circulated at the meeting which informed the Committee of a further call-in of this decision which had been received from a further six Members of the Committee.

Councillor Royle, the Lead Member for the first call-in, explained that they had called in this decision in order for the Committee to be better informed about the proposals.

Councillor Price, the Lead Member for the second call in, explained their reasons for calling in the decision, which related to :

- Concerns about the proposals cutting across an imminent review by Central Government on Children Centres



## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19 January 2016

- Concerns about the detrimental impact the budget reduction and proposals would have on the service itself and on Key Stage 2 results in the longer term.

The Head of Early Years reported that trade journals were suggesting that the Ministerial review of children's centres had been further delayed with no date set. He then reiterated that the proposals demonstrated the intention to retain all 19 children centres and focused on reorganising staffing structures in order to maximise on frontline services. The purpose of the consultation was to understand the practical implications and to look at the best models for staffing and centre cluster structures.

Members then raised a number of points and questions which included: -

- **Implications on children centre services** – in response to a question about whether this would reduce the number of days children centres would be able to provide some services, officers confirmed that the maintenance of services would be the top priority. It was added that the budget reduction was significant which may result in some change to the current programme of activities but it was not proposed to close any children centres on some days.
- **Impact of reduction in administrative and managerial staff** – in response to a question about how significant the reduction in the level of administrative and managerial staff would be, officers explained that each of the 19 centres had their own manager and own administrative team so by organising centres into clusters it would enable there to be fewer staff in these roles duplicating work and would in fact build resilience to cope with absences.
- **Cluster alignment** – in response to a question about how clusters would be aligned, officers explained that the purpose of the consultation was to look at options and the best possible structures for the clusters but that the intention was for clusters to be geographically based.
- **Consultation** – in response to a question about how the children's centres would be consulted, officers explained that individual meetings would be held with all affected staff at each centre.
- **Effect on schools with an integrated children's centre** – in response to a question about how the proposals would affect the schools attached to 18 of the 19 children's centres, officers explained that in terms of buildings, the children's centre part of the building was maintained by the local authority, whether that school was a maintained school or an academy. In addition, where centres were within schools, the Headteacher or other designated member of staff acted as the centre manager. The proposals would no longer require them to have that role. In terms of budgets, the Council commissioned each school to manage children centre services and for some schools they may have used some of the budget to supplement



## **Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19 January 2016**

salaries for additional children's centre duties but it was made clear that neither the school budget, nor the children's centre budget, should be used to supplement the other.

It was proposed that the Committee take no further action. An amendment to this proposal was made, to refer the matter back to the Cabinet for consideration, which was lost.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to take no further action in respect of the call in of the Cabinet decision (2/2016) to commence consultation on reconfiguring services, including the proposal for significant changes to the management and staffing of Medway's 19 Sure Start Children's Centres, and a reorganisation of the authority's early years services.

### **641 Call in: Future Integrated Youth Support Services Delivery**

#### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report regarding a call-in received from six Members of the Council of Cabinet decisions (3-6/2016) in relation to the commissioning of the three Medway young people's services, Youth Service, Youth Offending Service and YES IAG service and the related consultation. The Committee was requested to consider the Cabinet decisions and decide either to take no further action or to refer the decision back to Cabinet for reconsideration. An addendum report was circulated at the meeting which informed the Committee of a further call-in of these decisions, which had been received from a further six Members of the Committee.

Councillor Royle, the Lead Member for the first call-in, explained that they had called in these decisions in order for the Committee to be better informed about the proposals.

Councillor Price, the Lead Member for the second call in explained their reasons for calling in the decisions, which related to :

- Wanting further scrutiny of the decision to commission out the services,
- Concerns about outsourcing to a third party organisation, particularly in light of a current investigation relating to G4S,
- Concerns that a market testing event, that had taken place with potential providers, had included G4S.

The Director of Children and Adult Services explained that a lot of work had taken place prior to the options put forward to Cabinet on 12 January 2016, which included contact with a number of interested external providers and with local authorities who have outsourced youth services. She expressed her disappointment that the link between the recent allegations against G4S and these proposals had been made. She confirmed that Medway Council had not commissioned G4S to run the service at Medway Secure Training Centre (STC) and was not party to quality control of the contract. The Youth Justice

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19 January 2016

Board (YJB) commission the provider for the Medway STC and therefore YJB were responsible for monitoring the contractual arrangements.

The Interim Assistant Director, School Effectiveness and Inclusion added that initial market testing had taken place to ensure an appetite for outsourcing the service existed and that dialogue had taken place with G4S, along with many other providers. She added that the YJB, who oversee the Youth Offending Team, had stipulated that the outsourcing needed to be with a third sector provider (i.e. a third party with charitable status).

Members then raised a number of questions and comments which included: -

- **Reduction in funding for Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Award Scheme** – in response to a question about the impact the reduction in budget would have on the provision of this programme, the Head of Integrated Youth Support Services confirmed that colleagues and DofE representatives believed it possible to continue this service on the reduced budget and added that there was an expectation that community investment into the scheme would increase. He also explained that the National DofE restricted the local authority from sub-contracting the running of the programme.
- **Medway Youth Parliament (MYP) and the voice of young people** – in response to a question about engagement with MYP, officers explained that initial consultation on the proposals had taken place with MYP and added that engagement with young people would be key within the proposed specification. It was also confirmed that when speaking with local authorities who had already outsourced youth services, there had been no indication of a weakened engagement with young people and in some cases it had been substantially strengthened.
- **Other options to outsourcing MYP** – in response to a question about other possible options for MYP, officers confirmed that the consultation process would provide an opportunity to voice and explore alternative options but added that currently the proposal included MYP in the commissioned package.
- **Inclusion of youth service buildings and length of contract** – in response to a question about whether management of youth service buildings would be included in the contract and the impact this would have on the length of the contract, officers responded that the length of the contract would be a matter for Cabinet when they consider the outcome of the consultation. The inclusion of the buildings in the contract was being considered as part of the process and interested parties would be shown these buildings in order for them to understand their usage and potential.

It was proposed that the Committee take no further action. An amendment to this proposal was made, to refer the matter back to the Cabinet for consideration, which was lost.

**Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19 January  
2016**

**Decision:**

The Committee agreed to take no further action in respect of the call in of the Cabinet decisions (3-6/2016) in relation to the commissioning of the three Medway young people's services, Youth Service, Youth Offending Service and YES IAG service and the related consultation.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

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