

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

Thursday, 3 March 2016

6.30pm to 9.38pm

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) and Alex Tear (Church of England Representative)

Added members without voting rights:

Dan Hill (Healthwatch Medway CIC Representative), Peter Martin (Governor representative), Philip McCue (Medway Youth Parliament), James Peck (Medway Youth Parliament) and Karen White (Substitute - Headteacher representative)

In Attendance: Ann Domeney, Interim Assistant Director, Children's Social Care
Jan Guylar, Head of Legal Services/Deputy Monitoring Officer
Dominic Herrington, Regional Schools Commissioner
Helen Jones, Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning
Pauline Maddison, Assistant Director (Interim), School Effectiveness and Inclusion
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults Services
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer
Kevin Smart, School Challenge and Improvement Lead
Rebecca Smith, School Challenge and Improvement Lead
Graham Tanner, Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead
Angela Wellings, Interim Head of SEN and Inclusion

804 Apologies for absence

There were none.

805 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 19 January 2016 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

806 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

807 Declarations of interests and whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Johnson declared an interest in relation to item 5 (attendance of the Regional Schools Commissioner - RSC) as he was a member of the Governing Body at Chatham Grammar School for Girls. He also declared an interest in any reference to Mid Kent College, his employer, and explained that a close relative worked for a charity that would be providing respite care for children with special educational needs from 1 April 2016. Councillor Johnson remained in the meeting but explained he would leave should these specific issues arise.

Councillor Price declared an interest in relation to item 6 (attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services) as he was a member of the Governing Body at Oasis Academy, which was referred to during discussion. Councillor Price withdrew from the meeting during discussion on that issue.

Councillor Purdy declared an interest in relation to item 7 (Medway's Annual Schools' Performance Report for 2015) as she was a Governor at The Robert Napier, which was referred to during discussion.

Peter Martin (Medway Governors Association representative) declared an interest in references to The Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT) as he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Trust.

808 Attendance of the Regional Schools Commissioner

Discussion:

The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for South-East England and South London attended the meeting and circulated a diagram which demonstrated the main responsibilities of the eight RSCs across England, which included: -

- Challenging underperforming academies
- Deciding on the development of new academies
- Addressing underperformance in maintained schools through sponsored academies
- Making recommendations to Ministers about free school applications
- Encouraging organisations to become academy sponsors
- Approving changes to open academies.

The RSC explained that there were currently 127 academy sponsors in the South East and South London region and explained that his team was

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supported by a Headteacher Board, made up of six headteachers, which met on a three weekly basis.

The RSC then responded to Members' questions and comments, which included: -

- **Identifying poor performance early** – in response to a question about how the RSC identified issues around performance of academies early, the RSC explained that there were various sources of intelligence that were drawn upon before deciding on intervention. That included; performance data, Ofsted reports, complaints from parents and information and concerns raised by the local authority. The RSC confirmed that he had received letters from parents of Medway pupils about poor school performance and that communication between his office and Medway Council was strong.
- **Role of Ward Councillors** – in response to a question about what action local Councillors should take when they have concerns about an academy, the RSC confirmed that Councillors should take up initial concerns with the academy direct, the relevant academy trust and with the local authority. If a significant issue remained unresolved after this action then he welcomed Councillors to contact the RSC office directly.
- **Tackling underperformance in sponsored academies** – in response to a question about what action the RSC had taken in relation to the poor performance of some of Medway's sponsored academies, he confirmed that performance was not satisfactory in a number of Medway sponsored academies although some had a history of poor performance prior to becoming an academy. He confirmed that some of the schools had needed extensive challenge and support, which could include letters, visits, challenge at trust level, informal warnings and intense scrutiny of data with termly reporting. Where performance remained consistently poor then a change of academy trust could be made.
- **Floor targets for 2016** – in response to a question about what the floor targets would be for 2016, the RSC explained that levels had been removed and there would now be an expectation that 65% of children would meet their age relative expected attainment. All schools needed to be prepared for the increase in the expected attainment for Key Stage 2 from 2016 and his team were working with schools to support them in this.
- **Coasting schools in Medway** – in response to a question about whether any schools would be identified as coasting schools the RSC confirmed that this was not an area he was currently required to consider. It was likely schools would be considered following the outcome of validated Key Stage 2 data at the end of 2016.
- **Sponsors** – in response to a question about what organisations, other than schools, made the most effective academy trusts, the RSC responded that

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schools made up the majority of academy trusts but other types of organisations included charities, universities and sixth form colleges.

- **Role of Governing Bodies** – in response to a question about the tensions between the role of governing bodies and academy trusts, the RSC explained that it was important for some decisions to be taken at trust level and that the benefit of this was the additional capacity it gave Headteachers and Governing Bodies to focus on teaching, learning and engagement with the community. He added that it was important to have effective communications and transparency to enable clarity about decision making at all levels.
- **Reallocating an academy trust** – in response to a question regarding the factors that trigger a reallocation of an academy trust, the RSC explained that he would consider attainment results, Ofsted performances and whether a school had effective leadership and governance which had the capacity to improve. He added that a transfer of trust had occurred on approximately 12 occasions within the region as a result of examination of evidence in areas of concern.
- **Academies' willingness to work with local authorities** – in response to a question about what could be done when academies refuse to work collaboratively with the local authority, the RSC confirmed that he encouraged all academies to build good working relationships with the relevant local authority and this was the case for most academies. Where there was disengagement by an academy, the relevant local authority should raise that with the RSC who would seek to resolve the issue.
- **Capacity of RSCs** – in response to a question about the capacity of RSCs, the RSC explained that he had access to a team based at his office, as well as the Headteacher Board, a team of advisors and officials at the Department for Education . He also clarified that his role was purely focussing on school standards and building strong multi-academy trusts and did not have the breadth of responsibilities that local authorities had.

Decision:

The Committee thanked the Regional Schools Commissioner for the South-East and South London, Dominic Herrington, for his attendance.

809 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Discussion:

Members received an overview of progress on the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, all of which fall within the remit of this committee.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services then responded to Members' questions and comments, which included: -

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- **Exclusion rates** – in response to a question about exclusion rates the Portfolio Holder explained that exclusion rates in Medway were a particular area of concern and that the quality of teachers was key. He referred to a school which had been in special measures but with a new Headteacher who had raised expectations of staff, pupils and their families, the school had already seen a sharp decrease in exclusions and rapid improvement in attainment of children throughout the school.
- **Attainment at Key Stage 2** – in response to a question about what action the Portfolio Holder had taken in relation to improving attainment at Key Stage 2, he explained that he had visited schools and met with Headteachers and school leaders to discuss how performance and expectations could be raised. He explained that he has also been working with officers and the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to attract outstanding teachers from areas outside of Medway to work closely with schools that need additional support. In addition, he referred to the use of the Beanstalk charity to help children and their families with reading, which was having success.
- **Sure Start Children Centres** – in response to a question about how the service would run following implementation of the proposed restructure of staff, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the proposal was an innovative way of streamlining back office and management functions whilst maintaining frontline services at all 19 Medway Sure Start Children Centres.
- **Outsourcing of the Youth Service** – in response to a question relating to the outsourcing of the Youth Service and the impact on the Medway Youth Parliament (MYP), the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would do as much as possible to protect the success of the MYP and encouraged all MYP members to respond to the consultation.
- **Temporary Closure of Aut Even** – in response to a question about the temporary closure of Aut Even (a short breaks respite facility for children with disabilities) the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the facility had been closed to enable some urgent repairs needed to maintain health and safety measures and that the closure had provided the opportunity for all staff at the facility (not just Medway Council staff) to update their training following recent changes to roles and responsibilities. It was also confirmed that no funding from NHS partners had been withdrawn from Aut Even.
- **Support for families educating their children at home** – in response to a question about what support the local authority offered families who choose to educate their children at home, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that there was no financial support offered but families were given support and challenge and officers were working to ensure that the educational offer for all children was such that families did not choose to home school.

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- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** – the work that is done in relation to combat CSE in Medway was welcomed and although the Portfolio Holder was unable to confirm the number of cases that had been reported in Medway he did confirm that all partners were working very closely.
- **School places** – in response to a question about planning for school places, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that officers within the local authority carefully planned for school places and explored opportunities for increasing capacity at schools where necessary. Opportunities for free schools were also considered.

Decision:

The Portfolio Holder was thanked for his attendance.

810 Medway's Annual Schools' Performance Report for 2015

Discussion:

The Interim Assistant Director, School Effectiveness and Inclusion introduced the report, which provided the Committee with the 2015 education results at each key stage for Medway's schools and academies. She explained the importance of the Committee to understand the data, which consisted of published information. She highlighted that the bar for expected levels of performance were being increased for 2016 and that the particular areas of concern were performance in relation to Key Stages 2, 4 and 5 and in relation to exclusion rates.

- **Transfer of data** – a Member suggested that officers liaise with primary schools about improving the quality and timeliness of data given to secondary schools relating to the special educational needs (SEN) of children transferring to Year 7, so that secondary schools can improve their readiness for children as they begin their new school.
- **Variance between provisional and validated data** – in response to a question relating to the variance between the provisional and validated data, officers explained that there had been some differences and emphasised the importance of the Committee scrutinising the published factual data. It was also explained that the local authority was reliant on schools sharing provisional data, which was more difficult with the rise of academies.
- **Correlation between exclusions and SEN and academies** – A question was raised about the possible correlation between exclusions and how many related to children with SEN and also how many were from academies, compared to local authority maintained schools. In response officers explained that there was some correlation between children being excluded on a fixed-term basis and not having their learning needs met. The local authority was working with schools to provide a package of support from educational psychologists that would be more proactive in

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improving standards and reducing exclusions. Officers also confirmed that there had been a rise in exclusions as more schools in Medway become academies, which could also be attributable to the pressures in relation to attainment, however, it was added that the package of support being offered was to support all schools, including academies.

- **Differences between performance of schools with similar social profile and the same academy trust** – A question was asked about what can cause variances in performance between schools with a similar social profile and where they are managed by the same academy trust. Officers explained that for some schools there was a history of poor performance which took some time to address but confirmed that leadership was key in inspiring good quality teaching and moving a school's culture and expectations forward. The point was also made by officers that due to the existence of grammar schools in Medway, some variance of performance between secondary schools would be expected but that the gap between these needed to be reduced.
- **Performance of white British boys** – In response to a question about what interventions were being taken to improve the performance of white British boys, whose performance was nationally worse than all other groups of children, officers explained that there was a number of measures. The Continuous Professional Development offer was a large part of that, in equipping teachers to raise expectations and ambitions and to enable them to support pupils in a bespoke way. Some schools were also working with local universities, for example to do some targeted work in higher level mathematics and there was also a visit planned to an outstanding school in London where teachers could learn some practical examples of teaching to take back to their classrooms.
- **Supporting families** – in response to a question about how parents and carers were supported to champion and motivate their children to succeed, officers referred to partnership working with libraries and with Beanstalk, which was a charity a number of schools were working with to encourage children and their families to read together and to guide parents in how this can be done to achieve the best outcomes. Officers also referred to Saturday groups, fathers only groups and booster classes which were key to improve attainment amongst children with the support of their families.
- **Performance of sponsor led academies** – in response to a concern raised about the performance of sponsor led academies, officers explained that in most cases these types of academies related to schools that had previously been underperforming. If performance remained poor then the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) could decide to change the academy sponsor if it was felt the initial sponsor was not being effective in sustained and paced improvement. Where the local authority had concerns, these were raised frequently with the RSC.
- **Impact of English as an additional language (EAL)** – in response to a question about whether having a higher percentage of pupils with EAL had

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an impact on performance, officers explained that there were schools within areas in London with high EAL who achieved good results and so this fact, along with the lower attainment of white British boys, negated this argument. It was explained that children with EAL often learn very quickly and the important issue was to ensure that teachers have the confidence in relation to EAL and to find ways of communicating with parents of children with EAL who may speak little or no English.

- **Sharing of the annual report** – in response to a question about the circulation of the annual report, officers confirmed that it would be circulated to all partners, including Headteachers, Chairs of Governors, Diocese Boards and Academy Trusts.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

811 Proposed Development of The Health Service or Variation in Provision of Health Service - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services - CAMHS

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning introduced the report which advised the Committee of a proposal under consideration by NHS Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Medway Council to reconfigure and recommission CAMHS on a Medway population footprint.

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

- **Resource** – In response to a question about whether Medway had the resource to take on the project and deliver a Medway only CAMHS, officers explained that in terms of the development of the model, there was a commissioning lead working on the project and capacity would increase following some additional health investment in order to drive transformation forward. In terms of the resource for service delivery, it was believed that the new defined service model, based on a Medway footprint, would be attractive to providers. In addition, it was confirmed that current staff would have transfer of employment rights.
- **Healthwatch** – The Healthwatch Medway CIC representative explained that Healthwatch had welcomed the Local Transformation Plan and the whole family approach (referred to at page 113 of the agenda) and expressed the importance of keeping families informed as the reconfiguration process develops. Officers confirmed that Healthwatch Medway CIC were a key partner in the engagement process.
- **Services for looked after and adopted children** – in response to a question about ensuring appropriate services are available for looked after children (LAC) and adopted children, officers explained that the reconfiguration provided the opportunity to ensure a more integrated

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service which would include various specialist aspects, including services for LAC and adopted children.

- **Pastoral care in schools** – in response to a question about capacity of schools to provide pastoral care and the difference in levels of such support across schools, officers confirmed that Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE) had a key role to play. Public Health was working with a number of schools to provide young people with support on various issues, including self-harm, eating disorders and mental health awareness. In addition, the intention to work more closely with schools to develop and commission a local early help offer was explained, which would enable a more effective and efficient framework to ensure the right support was available to the right children and young people.
- **SAFE Project** – a question was raised about the continuation of this project, which worked with schools to promote healthy relationships based on equality and respect. Officers confirmed that the project was not currently commissioned by Medway Council but that the Council was in dialogue with the provider to explore ways in which this work could be continued.
- **Learning from other areas** – in response to a question about learning from other areas that had reconfigured the service in a similar way, officers explained that this was an initial aspect of the project and Solihull in particular had done some similar work to reconfigure the service.
- **Market testing** – in response to a question about whether market testing had taken place; officers explained that market testing was fundamental and would be undertaken imminently with a number of providers already indicating their interest.
- **Impact on specialist services** – in response to a concern raised about access to specialist services due to the reduced footprint, officers confirmed that improvements at intervention and prevention level would help to drive down demand on specialist services and that where it made sense to do so some specialist services could be delivered on a wider footprint.
- **Managing public expectation** – a question was raised about managing public expectation and the role Ward Members could play in helping to support and inform constituents, along with the suggestion of a Member Briefing at the appropriate time. Officers explained that Kent County Council and the seven Kent CCGs were also reconfiguring and re-procuring their own CAMHS and therefore timelines for Medway had been adapted to accommodate the Kent process to avoid interruptions for service users. It was added that a mobilisation period of approximately 5-6 months was considered essential and therefore a possible date for the new service to go live was anticipated to be 1 September 2017.

Decisions:

- 1) The Committee considered the proposed reconfiguration and recommissioning of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to be a substantial health service variation.
- 2) The Committee recommended the Draft Service Model to the Cabinet to agree for consultation.

812 Medway Youth Parliament - Annual Conference Findings

Discussion:

The Medway Youth Parliament (MYP) representatives introduced the report which provided the Committee with the findings and outcomes from the MYP Annual Conference held in November 2015, which was entitled, "Just because you can't see it: Exploring Mental Health".

Members then raised the following points and questions, which included:

- **Sources of stress** – in response to a concern raised that schools had been cited as a source of stress, the MYP representatives responded that it was felt that all schools need to have a comprehensive pastoral support offer to help mitigate the stresses of school, which often related to examinations. It was confirmed that school pressure was also an issue raised with Medway Healthwatch.
- **Engagement in the conference** - Members commented on how well young people had engaged and contributed to the discussions at the conference and the particular success of the speakers corner was highlighted. It was confirmed that all schools were encouraged to engage in the conference.
- **Circulation of the MYP report** – in response to a question about the circulation of the MYP report, the MYP representatives confirmed that the report had been sent to all Headteachers and it was hoped that Headteachers would read and disseminate the key points of the report through the school.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and thanked the Medway Youth Parliament for their submission.

813 Council Plan Q3 2015/16 Performance Monitoring Report

Discussion:

The Interim Assistant Director, Children's Social Care introduced the report which provided the Committee with a summary of performance for Quarter 3 on

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areas that fall within the remit of this Committee. She highlighted areas where performance was good and areas requiring improvement.

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

- **Numbers of social care staff in substantive posts** – in response to a request for this figure, officers confirmed it was approximately 30 posts (including management positions)
- **Corporate Parenting Board** – in response to a question about future dates, officers undertook to inform Members of the CPB of forthcoming dates at the earliest opportunity.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

814 Work programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which advised the Committee of its work programme. She informed the Committee that no expressions of interest had been received for the Headteacher and Teacher positions on the Committee and therefore a second invite for expressions of interest would be sent via the School Information Bulletin after the Easter break.

Decision:

The Committee agreed the work programme as set out at Appendix 1, subject to the 16-19 Strategy being added to the list of items for the May 2016 meeting.

Chairman

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