

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

Tuesday, 6 December 2016

6.30pm to 9.05pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Cooper, Fearn, Franklin, Howard, Johnson, Kemp, Opara, Price, Purdy, Royle (Chairman), Saroy, 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:

Tina Lovey (Head Teacher Representative), Paddy Powell (Healthwatch Medway CIC Representative) and MYP Cabinet Member - Substitute (Medway Youth Parliament)

Substitutes: George Perfect – MYP Cabinet Member (Medway Youth Parliament)

In Attendance: Dr Andrew Burnett Interim Director of Public Health
Domeney, Interim Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services
Gerard Flanagan, Interim Programme Lead
Lorraine Foster, Programme Lead - Looked After Children
Michael Griffiths, Partnership Commissioning Lead, Children and Families
James Harman, Senior Public Health Manager
Simon Harrington, Programme Lead, School Services
Michael Hood, Personalisation and Finance Lead
Sameera Khan, Assistant Head of Legal Services
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer
Ian Sutherland, Interim Director, Children and Adults Services
Phil Watts, Chief Finance Officer

505 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Avey and Chi Chi Nwodoh (Medway Youth Parliament Cabinet Member).

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506 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 6 October 2016 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

507 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

508 Declarations of interests and whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

Tina Lovey, Headteacher declared an interest in item 9 (Short Breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities and The Local Offer) as the trust she was employed by provided short breaks provision. She did not take part in the discussion on this item.

509 School Admission Arrangements 2018

Discussion:

The Programme Lead – School Services, introduced the report which provided the Committee with the proposed 2018 admission arrangements. The report included details of the consultation on the proposed primary and secondary co-ordinated admission schemes. Three responses to the consultation had been received during its six week period, all of which were supportive of the proposals. The Programme Lead – School Services also referred the Committee to Appendix 3 of the report which provided Members with additional detail on Medway Test review requests, compared with previous years. This had been provided following a question that had been raised at full Council on 13 October 2016.

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

- **Utilising preferences** – in response to a question about how the local authority supports and encourages parents and carers to provide more preferences to increase their chances of being allocated a school of their choice, the Programme Lead – School Services explained that providing up to six preferences was encouraged within the admission to primary school booklet and added that admissions staff work with nurseries also to ensure that this advice is provided to parents.
- **Delays in processing casual admission applications** – in response to comments regarding delays in processing casual admission applications the Programme Lead – School Services apologised for the delays that

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some families had experienced. He explained that there had been a large number of applications, with more than 500 applications being received between July and September 2016. He also explained that the team was experiencing some delays in getting the required responses from schools to process applications but confirmed that the process was being reviewed to avoid future delays.

- **Support for families awaiting school place allocation** – in response to a question about whether support for families to home educate children that are awaiting their casual admission application to be processed and to be allocated a school place, officers confirmed that this was not currently a service that the admissions team provided and work was being concentrated on reducing delays for the future to ensure casual admission applications are processed within much shorter timeframes
- **Reasons for the PAN increases** – in response to a question about the reasons for the three proposed Published Admission Number (PAN) increases, the Programme Lead – School Services confirmed that this largely related to demographic pressures.
- **Summer born children and delayed entry** – in response to a question about how the delayed entry operated for summer born children who chose to delay their entry to school the Programme Lead – School Services confirmed that parents have the right to delay entry for their child until the term after their fifth birthday but confirmed that this needed to be formally requested and to be agreed with the school and work took place with the family, the Headteacher and Education Psychologists to ensure deferment is best for the child. Families were not able to defer for an entire year, if they wanted their child to start the following September then unless specific agreement was given the family would need to reapply for a Year 1 place for the following September.

Decision:

The Committee recommended the proposed admission arrangements and schemes for 2018 to the Cabinet for approval.

510 Draft Capital and Revenue Budget 2017/2018

Discussion:

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report which provided an update on progress towards setting the Council's draft capital and revenue budgets for 2017/18. In accordance with the Constitution, Cabinet was required to develop 'initial budget proposals' approximately three months before finalising the budget and the Council setting council tax levels at the end of February 2017.

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The draft budget was based on the principles contained in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2016/2020 and reflected the latest formula grant assumptions.

A Member asked if there had been any changes following the Autumn statement but the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that this had little impact on the revenue settlement.

Decision:

The Committee noted that Cabinet had instructed officers to continue to work with Portfolio Holders in formulating robust proposals to balance the budget for 2017/18 and beyond.

511 Sufficiency Report 2016/17

Discussion:

The Programme Lead – Looked After Children talked the Committee through the report which set out how Medway Council would meet the needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers in such a way as to ensure improved outcomes. She reported that the number of looked after children had decreased in the last year from 441 to 414 and that there had also been a reduction in new entrants to foster care. There had been an ongoing annual increase in the number of looked after children known by the Youth Offending Team and it was thought that this was due to the increased complex needs of children in care in Medway.

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

- **Increasing in-house foster carers** – concern was raised with regards to how Medway could increase its in-house foster carer resource. In response the Interim Deputy Director, Children and Adult Services explained that Medway foster carers were very positive about Medway, feeling well supported compared to some experiences of foster carers working for independent fostering agencies (IFAs). It was believed if Medway built on this brand and good reputation it would attract more foster carers in-house.
- **Young people's views on GP services** – the representative from Healthwatch Medway CIC explained that they would be working with a group of young people aged 16+ years to determine their views and experiences of local GP services and the outcome would be reported back.
- **Support for Care Leavers to live independently** – Officers confirmed that Care Leavers were supported to ensure they could live well and independently. The range and flexibility of supported accommodation was being increased, Personal Advisors provided support to help young people learn budgeting skills and more focus would be placed on this

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skill building with foster carers to ensure it is started with young people at an earlier stage.

- **LAC and youth offending** – Following a request the Programme Lead – Looked After Children undertook to provide an update on the number of LAC subject to conviction, final warning or reprimand following discussion with the Youth Offending Team.
- **Engagement with IFAs** – in response to a question about how this would work officers confirmed that a series of workshops were planned as this had been identified by providers as the best way to engage.

Decision:

The Committee recommended the Sufficiency Report 2016-17, as set out at Appendix A to the report, to the Cabinet for approval.

512 Re-commissioning of Medway Child Health Services

Discussion:

The Interim Director of Public Health and the Senior Public Health Manager introduced the report which outlined the proposed approach and direction of travel for the re-commissioning of Medway's paediatric health services, which included the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme (HCP) and community paediatric health services. The model consisted of two lots, one being services funded by the Council and the other being services funded by Medway NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Officers confirmed that they did consider the proposals to be a substantial variation but it was anticipated that the change would mainly affect providers in terms of working practices. The impact was expected to be less significant in relation to service users, although this depended on the model of service provision developed throughout the commissioning process.

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

- **Engagement with Healthwatch Medway CIC** – it was confirmed that engagement would take place with Healthwatch Medway CIC as part of the formal consultation process which would begin in the new year, subject to Cabinet approval.
- **Inclusion of other conditions** – it was suggested that some impairments and conditions should be included within the paperwork that were currently omitted such as dyslexia, crohn's disease and allergies. Officers undertook to look into this where such conditions would be managed by the service areas identified in the papers.

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- **Data issues and acute health services** – concern was raised about data availability and in relation to information in the report regarding to lengths of stay and cancelled appointments. Officers confirmed that there were some issues relating to data quality due to difficulties with some data management systems. It was also confirmed that there were currently service pressures resulting from a high volume of referrals to acute services, and that the re-commissioning of services needed to have whole system buy-in, including support from schools and GPs. It was added that future service specifications and associated outcome frameworks would help to drive efficiency in service provision, and that issues that relate to services that are outside of the scope of this commissioning project could be taken forward via the CCG.

Decision:

The Committee determined that the recommissioning of Medway Child Health Services was a substantial variation.

513 Short Breaks Provision for Children With Disabilities and The Local Offer

Discussion:

The Interim Partnership Commissioner for Children with Disabilities introduced the report which provided the Committee with further details relating to provider capacity and budgetary information, as requested at the previous meeting. He and the Personalisation and Finance Lead then provided the Committee with a presentation which gave further information about direct payments, how it increased choice and flexibility and how families were supported if they chose to access support through direct payments.

Officers and the Interim Director of Children and Adults Services confirmed that although there was an intention to promote the use of direct payments with families, there was a recognition that not all children and young people could have their needs met in this way. It was added that the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services - Lead Member had requested officers to incorporate the short breaks work with another piece of work which was currently being done to review the provision of overnight respite care. These strands would therefore be integrated into a joint strategy.

- **Recruitment of volunteers** – the development of a dedicated team of voluntary workers at Aut Even had been referred to in the report at paragraph 2.10. In response to a question about where volunteers would be recruited from the Interim Director confirmed that opportunities for recruitment were always being explored and it was often a good way of getting work experience to lead on to employment opportunities.
- **Short term closures of Aut Even** – following a comment about the short term closures of Aut Even the Interim Director confirmed that there had been two short closures, both to resolve safety issues. Since these

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closures there had been substantial investment into the facility and an improvement in the quality of equipment and facilities to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements..

- **Direct Payments** – some Members shared experiences of their constituents' use of direct payments. One Member said she was aware of people finding direct payments difficult to manage while another Member had received positive feedback, stating that people had felt empowered by the increased control and choice that direct payments brought them.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and recommended that further work be done to integrate the short breaks work with the overnight respite review to create an integrated strategy for short breaks, incorporating residential and non-residential provision.

514 Council Plan Quarter 2 2016/17 Performance Monitoring Report

Discussion:

The Interim Deputy Director, Children and Adult Services, introduced the report which summarised the performance of the directorate in Quarter 2 of year 2016/17 for the key measures of success and projects for this Committee.

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

- **Children not in employment, education or training (NEET)** – in response to a question about the percentage of NEET children that were known to youth offending, the Interim Deputy Director confirmed that this information could be sourced via the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Police records. She added that NEET figures in Medway were particularly high because Medway Youth Trust were very proactive in identifying young people as NEET.
- **Work experience within the local authority** – following a request the Deputy Director undertook to report back on the number of young people who had been provided with work experience opportunities at Medway Council.
- **Social Work Academy** – officers undertook to provide Committee Members with a briefing note on the Social Work Academy.
- **Percentage of children persistently absent from school** – in response to a question about the outcome of the most recent return on persistently absent children, which had been due in November 2016, officers undertook to report this back to the Committee.

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- **Results by school** – in relation to the reported increase in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 results it was asked that this information be provided for each school, which officers undertook to provide.
- **Joint working practices** – the Headteacher reported that a trainee social worker was now working with her trust which she welcomed and considered to be a significant step forward in relation to joint working practices. The Interim Deputy Director added that this support model was being rolled out to all schools to provide early help support.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

515 Work programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which provided the Committee with its current work programme and proposed amendments. She highlighted that expressions of interest in the vacant positions on the Committee for teacher and parent governor would be invited in the new year.

Decision:

The Committee agreed its work programme, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to:

- Programming the Youth Offending Team (YOT) Plan for the January meeting of the Committee;
- Removing the Community Children's Nursing Service from the work programme.

Chairman

Date:

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