

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

Thursday, 19 January 2017
6.30pm to 8.15pm

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, 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:

Peter Martin (Governor representative), Paddy Powell (Healthwatch Medway CIC Representative) and MYP Cabinet Member (Medway Youth Parliament)

Substitutes: Councillors:
Griffin (Substitute for Royle)
Joy (Substitute for Avey)

In Attendance: Councillor David Brake, Portfolio Holder for Adult Services
Ann Domeney, Interim Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services
Sue Dunkin, Principle Independent Reviewing Officer
Sameera Khan, Assistant Head of Legal Services
Pauline Maddison, Assistant Director (Interim), School Effectiveness and Inclusion
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer
Ian Sutherland, Interim Director, Children and Adults Services
Alex Wilkes, Operations Officer, Duke of Edinburgh Award
Andrew Willetts, Head of Service – Early Help
Jackie Wood, Head of Provider Services

622 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Avey and Royle, Tina Lovey (Headteacher), Luke Morgan (Medway Youth Parliament) and Alex Tear (Church of England representative).

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623 Record of meeting

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

624 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

625 Declarations of interests and whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

Peter Martin (Medway Governors Association representative) declared an interest in item 7 (CALL-IN: Future Integrated Youth Support Service Delivery) as he was the Independent Chairman of the Medway Youth Trust.

626 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services

Discussion:

The Committee considered the report from the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services which detailed an update on performance within the Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Service. It was emphasised that the numbers of children who are looked after or who are subject to a Child Protection Plan had both reduced. The Portfolio Holder introduced the Principle Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to the Committee and confirmed that since his last report to the Committee he had met with the team and continues to do so on a regular basis.

Members then raised the following comments and questions:

- **Relationships with the Children in Care Council and Healthwatch Medway CIC** – the Medway Healthwatch CIC representative confirmed that the IROs had a good relationship with the Children in Care Council and Healthwatch Medway CIC were looking forward to working with the team also.
- **Delays due to interpreting services availability** – concern was raised in terms of the delays caused by interpreter availability. The Portfolio Holder confirmed this was an issue and work was being done to address this and keep delays to a minimum, whilst ensuring that there was not an unreasonable reliance on children or family members to interpret.

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Decision:

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Services was thanked for his attendance.

627 CALL-IN: Future of the Medway Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

Discussion:

Members considered a report regarding a call-in received from six Members of the Council of Cabinet's decisions (149/2016 – 151/2016 – 20 December 2016) in relation to the future of Medway's Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Award programme. The report also informed the Committee of a petition against the transitioning of the Medway DofE Programme, which had been received by the Council. The officer's response to this petition had been attached to the report at Annex B and the petitioner had decided to refer the petition to the Committee for consideration. The Committee was requested to consider the Cabinet decisions and decide either to take no further action, refer the decisions back to Cabinet or to refer the decisions to Council for reconsideration.

Councillor Price, the Lead Member for the call-in, explained the reasons for the call-in as outlined in paragraph 2.2 of the report. In particular, he made the following points to the Committee:

- It was believed that there were originally three options that were considered regarding the future of the DofE Award in Medway but only two options were reported to Cabinet;
- There was a lack of clarity in relation to the activity required by the DofE South East Region, who it was proposed would take over the management of the DofE Award in Medway;
- Concern regarding the future management of volunteers;
- Concern the proposed model would lead to making participation of disadvantaged young people more difficult.

Leonie King, Co-Chair of the Medway Youth Panel, then spoke on behalf of the petitioners. She explained that the Youth Panel were not in support of the proposed model and reiterated that 1109 young people had signed the petition against the transition. It was considered that the views of the Youth Panel had not been taken into account. Petitioners felt there was too much uncertainty about the future of the programme under the proposal and that the highly successful programme should continue to be run by the local authority as it was considered that this would be the best option to keep the scheme accessible to all young people and to maintain its performance.

Officers confirmed that the option relating to the DofE delivery being managed by the regional DofE had not been available when discussions on Medway DofE's future first took place earlier in 2016. Officers also confirmed that the DofE Award had charitable status and was not a private company and that the option to transition delivery to the regional DofE Award provided the best solution in terms of resilience and lowering risk to the programmes future, given the ongoing financial pressures the local authority faced.

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

- **Pre-decision scrutiny** – in response to a question about why the proposals had not been brought to the Committee as pre-decision scrutiny, it was confirmed that the Committee had not requested the item to be added to the work programme when considering items on the Cabinet's Forward Plan.
- **Support for schools with varying participation levels** – The representative from The Duke of Edinburgh's Award explained that the scheme was operated on a scalable structure to accommodate schools with varying levels of participation. He added that the DofE worked hard to reach as many young people as possible and also had a fundraising department which looked at innovative ways to raise funds and support more young people.
- **Supporting Looked After Children (LAC)** – In response to a question about how LAC would be supported to participate in the scheme, the representative from The DofE's Award explained that he was the regional lead for engaging LAC. He had recently met with Virtual Headteachers across the region on how more LAC could be supported to take part and there had been an agreement to write participation of the DofE Award DofE participation into Personal Education Plans (PEPs), which would then make the scheme eligible for funding from the pupil premium fund. It was clarified that this pupil premium fund differed from that provided to schools. He also added that licences were not only provided to schools but also to fostering agencies, housing associations and Medway Youth Trust in order to deliver the programme to young people that are considered to be harder to reach.
- **Consultation with the Children in Care Council (CiCC)** – in response to a question officers confirmed that the CiCC had not been formally consulted on the proposals relating to the Medway DofE Award Scheme. However, many of the young people who were part of the CiCC were consulted through other parts of the consultation process. Officers also undertook to invite the Regional The DofE's Award representative to a future CiCC meeting.
- **Budget implications for keeping the scheme in house** – in response to a question officers confirmed that the DofE programme would require continued funding by the local authority if kept in-house, with a projected budget of £32,000 by Year 5. The proposal to outsource the programme to the DofE's Award would require no budget from the Council by Year 3.
- **Concerns regarding uncertainty for the future** – some Members were concerned that the proposals were too high risk for the future of the programme. The Regional DofE's Award representative explained that they were experienced in this transition with 10 out of 13 unitary authorities within the South East having already transitioned delivery to them. He

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added that the DofE Award had continued to grow year on year with more young people than ever participating in the programme. He also confirmed that young people should experience no difference to their experience as a result of the transfer.

The Committee considered a proposal that the matter be referred to full Council to allow time for the Children in Care Council to be formally consulted and to enable the concerns raised by Members (detailed above) to be addressed and reported to all Members of the Council. On being put to the vote, the proposal was lost.

Decision:

The Committee accepted the Cabinet decisions 149 – 151/2016, as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report, and agreed to take no further action.

628 CALL-IN: Future Integrated Youth Support Service Delivery

Discussion:

Members considered a report regarding a call-in received from six Members of the Council of Cabinet's decisions (147/2016 – 148/2016 – 20 December 2016) in relation to the future Integrated Youth Support Service delivery. The Committee was requested to consider the Cabinet decisions and decide either to take no further action, refer the decisions back to Cabinet or to refer the decisions to Council for reconsideration.

Councillor Price, the Lead Member for the call-in, explained the reasons for the call-in as outlined in paragraph 2.2 of the report. In particular, he raised concerns regarding a lack of clarity in relation to the future model of the youth service and how it would operate with a reduced budget. He also raised concern about the ongoing use and support of volunteers.

Officers confirmed that the budget envelope was the same as it had been when the local authority were considering outsourcing the youth service earlier in 2016, therefore this has not changed. It was also explained that officers had been working to develop a model that recognised the reduced budget while minimising the impact to the service and it was considered that this was best achieved by integrating the Youth Service with the broader children's services, for example, Early Help. There had been no firm decision on the structure as yet but there was an intention to retain a service at Youth Centres and then to direct targeted services to safeguarding priorities to complement Early Help support. Officers also confirmed that supporting and using volunteers was an area that would be developed, particularly in relation to youth services.

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

- **Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA)** – a Member raised concern regarding some of the potential adverse impact highlighted within the DIA (at page 54 of the agenda). Officers confirmed that with a reduced budget

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this was a risk but that the integration of the service with Early Help would minimise the risk of any impact.

- **Timeline of finalising the new model** – officers confirmed that once there was a confirmed decision in relation to the future Integrated Youth Support Service delivery they would continue their work in developing the model with a view to finalising this as soon as possible.
- **Lack of clarity of future model** – A Member reiterated their concerns about the lack of clarity around the proposed model and officers undertook to provide an update report at the appropriate time to keep Members informed.
- **Medway Youth Parliament (MYP) engagement** – The MYP representative explained that MYP had experienced very positive dialogue with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), the Leader and the Chief Executive about the proposals but added that some members of MYP were still very disappointed in the change from outsourcing to keeping the service in house because of the amount of time MYP had given to working with officers on the outsourcing of the Youth Service. There was also discontent within MYP about the amount of time the planning of the future service delivery had taken with there still being uncertainty about the final model. He confirmed that a further meeting with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), the Director of Children and Adult Services and senior officers had been arranged for March 2017.
- **Benefits of integrating the service** – in response to a question officers confirmed that by integrating the Youth Service with other children's services, such as Early Help, it was believed this would provide the minimum impact to service delivery, given the reduced budget as it allows a flexible package to be adopted and would support improved outcomes for young people accessing the service.

The Committee considered a proposal that the matter be referred to full Council to enable more detail to be provided and considered by all Members of the Council, including more detail about why there was a change from the original intention to outsource the service. On being put to the vote, the proposal was lost.

Decision:

The Committee accepted the Cabinet decisions 147 – 148/2016, as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report, and agreed to take no further action.

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629 Youth Offending Team Strategic Plan 2016/17

Discussion:

The Interim Deputy Director, Children and Adult Services and the Head of Integrated Family Support Services introduced the report which provided the Committee with the proposed Medway Youth Justice Plan for 2016-17. It was explained that the plan was at its final phase and a new plan would be created for 2017/18 which would reflect the Youth Offending Team (YOT) becoming more integrated with other children's services in the future.

Members then raised comments and questions, which included: -

- **Looked after children (LAC) and reduction in offending** – A Member referred to a reference on page 17 of the plan and asked whether this could be looked at in more depth either via a task group or via the Corporate Parenting Board. The Deputy Director confirmed that there was an intention for the Corporate Parenting Board to start working in a themed meeting approach and welcomed this topic to be used for one of those meetings to look at the issue in-depth.
- **Gang culture** – A Member asked whether this was an imminent issue for Medway and one that should be planned for. Officers explained that the Home Office had reviewed the risk for Medway and had reported its findings to the Community Safety Partnership. It was found that Medway was not at high risk of gang culture but it had recommended approximately 12 actions which would be built into the Community Safety Plan and the Youth Justice Plan. Officers undertook to provide the details of these recommendations.

Decision:

The Committee

- 1) recommended the Youth Offending Team Strategic Plan 2016-17 to the Cabinet, as attached at Appendix A.
- 2) recommended that Looked After Children and reduction in offending should be the topic of one of the future themed meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board.

630 Update regarding Medway's Adoption Agency

Discussion:

The Interim Deputy Director, Children and Adult Services and the Head of Provider Services introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update regarding the progress of the proposal to develop a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). It was explained that Medway was leading in terms of agreeing the governance arrangements and that a bid had been made to the Department

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for Education, on behalf of the RAA, to create a Centre of Excellence for Adoption Services. If successful, the £982,000 would support families across the region (Medway, Kent and Bexley) going through the adoption service and support families who have already adopted and need some extra support.

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

- **Recognition of good performance** – Members praised officers for the high performance, the hard work and the commitment shown by staff within Adoption Services.
- **Opportunities to meet staff from other local authorities within the RAA** – a Members asked if there would be an opportunity to meet with staff from the other authorities within the RAA (Kent and Bexley). In response officers confirmed that this could be arranged but would need to be later in the year when the RAA had developed further.
- **Coffee evening event** – Members referred to a coffee evening event that had been held to enable Members to meet with adoptive and prospective adoptive parents. A Member commented on the positive feedback parents had given him that evening and he hoped to see this event re run in the future.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

631 Work programme

Decision:

The Committee agreed the work programme as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Chairman

Date:

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