

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

Thursday, 8 March 2018

6.35pm to 10.20pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Aldous, Cooper, Franklin, Johnson, Kemp, Opara, Price, Purdy, Saroy, Wicks (Vice-Chairman) and Williams

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

Akinola Edun (Parent Governor Representative) and Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church representative)

Added members without voting rights:

Fay Cordingley (Teacher Representative), Michelle Dewar (Substitute - Medway Parents and Carers Forum), David Laming (Healthwatch Medway CIC Representative), George Peck (Medway Youth Council Cabinet Member) and George Perfect (Medway Youth Council Chairman)

Substitutes:

Councillors:
Mrs Josie Iles (Substitute for Fearn)
Steve Iles (Substitute for Joy)

In Attendance:

David Ballard, Interim Manager Aut Even (Short Breaks Service)
Helen Jones, Assistant Director – Commissioning, Business and Intelligence
Jade Milnes, Democratic Services Officer
Sameera Khan, Assistant Head of Legal Services
Councillor Andrew Mackness, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services - Lead Member (statutory responsibility, including education)
Mary Mason, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children (LAC) and Designated Clinical Officer (DCO), NHS Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
Councillor Martin Potter, Portfolio Holder for Educational Attainment and Improvement
Kevin Smart, School Challenge and Improvement Lead
Caren Smith, Deputy Manager Aut Even (Short Breaks Service)
Rebecca Smith, School Challenge and Improvement Lead
Ian Sutherland, Director of Children and Adults Services
Graham Tanner, Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead
Nikki Teesdale, Deputy Chief Nurse, NHS Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
Wendy Vincent, Head of Integrated 0-25 Disability Services

801 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from the Chairman, Councillor Royle and Councillors Fearn and Joy, Keith Clear (Medway Parents and Carers Forum), David Lane (Parent Governor Representative) and Tina Lovey (Headteacher Representative).

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Councillor Wicks chaired the meeting.

802 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 11 January 2018 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

803 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

The Chairman agreed that agenda item 6 (Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Educational Attainment and Improvement) be considered by the Committee as an urgent item by reason of special circumstances, specifically, to enable the Committee to consider the report at the same time as the Annual School Performance Report.

The Chairman also agreed that agenda items 8 (Outcome of Joint Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection) and 10 (Special Educational Needs (SEN) Home to School Transport Consultation and Policy Review) be considered by the Committee as urgent items by reason of special circumstances, specifically, to enable the Committee's comments to be submitted to the Cabinet before it made any decisions on the matters on 10 April 2018.

804 Chairman's Announcements

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman sent condolences to the family and all the students and staff of the Williamson Trust following the sad passing of Gary Vyse, Chief Executive of the Trust.

The Chairman welcomed Akinola Edun, Parent Governor Representative, to the Committee and announced to the Committee that the Assistant Director, Commissioning, Business and Intelligence would be leaving Medway Council to take up a new post at another Local Authority. He took this opportunity to thank the Assistant Director, Commissioning, Business and Intelligence for her hard work.

The Chairman also sent the Committee's best wishes to the Chairman, Councillor Royle, who had sent his apologies for absence.

805 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Cooper declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 5 (Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), 6 (Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Educational Attainment and Improvement) and 7 (Annual School Performance Report 2017) by virtue of her position as governor at Rivermead School.

Whilst there was no reference to St Francis Pre-School on the agenda, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles asked for it to be recorded that she was the Chairman of the St Francis Pre-School Management Committee. She stated that if reference was made to the School she would leave the meeting during consideration of the item.

Councillor Johnson declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 (Annual School Performance Report 2017) by virtue of his position as governor, Director and Trustee of Chatham Grammar School for Girls Academy Trust. He stated that the Academy Trust no longer controls the school but still exists during the winding up period.

Councillor Kemp declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 7 (Annual School Performance Report 2017) and 10 (Special Educational Needs (SEN) Home to School Transport Consultation Policy and Review) by virtue of his position as a governor of Rainham Mark Grammar School and a Member of the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education.

Fay Cordingley (Teacher Representative) declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 (Annual School Performance Report 2017) because she worked at St Margaret's Church of England Junior School and St James Church of England Primary School.

Akinola Edun (Parent Governor Representative) declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 (Annual School Performance Report 2017) because he was a governor at English Martyrs' Roman Catholic Primary School.

Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church Representative) declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 (Annual School Performance Report 2017) because he was the Chair of governors at two schools including St Augustine of Canterbury and St John Fisher Catholic School.

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George Peck, the Medway Youth Council Cabinet Member, declared a non-pecuniary interest in 7 (Annual School Performance Report 2017) because he was a student at Medway University Technical College (UTC) mentioned within the report.

George Perfect, the Medway Youth Council Chairman, declared a non-pecuniary interest in 7 (Annual School Performance Report 2017) because he was a student and Chairman of the Student Council at Robert Napier School part of the Fort Pitt Thomas Aveling Academies Trust (FPTA) mentioned within the report.

806 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member)

Discussion:

Members received an overview of progress on the areas within the terms of reference on this Committee covered by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services as set out below:

- Children's Partnership Commissioning (0-25)
- Children's Provider Services (including Adoption, Fostering, Supported Accommodation and Residential Care)
- Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Services
- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (including Mental Health)
- Early Help (including Medway Action for Families, Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Youth Services)
- Early Years
- Inclusion
- Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), Councillor Andrew Mackness, thanked Medway headteachers, teachers and pupils for achieving excellent examination results. He also thanked a number of groups, including the Children in Care Council, Corporate Parenting Board and the Medway Youth Council for their contributions to children's services and placed on record his thanks to the Director and Deputy Director of Children and Adults and the Children's team for driving forward children's services and safeguarding. He then responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Abbey Court** – The Portfolio Holder stated that Abbey Court was an outstanding primary and secondary school and that he had visited the school to meet with the children and staff.

In response to questions concerning an insufficiency of places for children at the secondary school and the need to commence Phase 2 of the school's building programme, the Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that within the capital funds that were available, the Council had invested considerably to build the new school and that it was not his,

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or the School Place Planning Team's, understanding that there was an insufficient number of places for children within the secondary school. He added that the Council needed to prioritise funding based on need and that he sat on the Capital Advisory Board which was well informed on projections. However, he undertook to review this with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance on presentation of relevant statistics which demonstrated a need for additional capacity in school places.

With reference to transport assistance for children who were below the statutory school age, the Portfolio Holder explained to Members that the Council had taken a difficult decision not to fund travel assistance for nursery children by default but that special individual cases were assessed. He added that the Council fulfilled its statutory duties.

With regards to a question concerning a decrease in the number of children attending the nursery at Abbey Court, the Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that he was not aware of any cases where a transport appeal had been turned down for children under 5 to attend the nursery. He also advised Members that changes to Early Years funding had given parents more choice of where to send their children. If a case was presented where a child was prevented from receiving their preferred nursery place, he would request officers to review the matter.

- **Joint Local Area Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection** – With reference to the strengths and weaknesses of the Council outlined within the report on the outcome of the joint local area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection (item 8 of the agenda refers), a Member asked what could be done to ensure children felt safe within their community. In response, the Portfolio Holder explained to the Committee that this inspection was a joint inspection undertaken by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted which assessed health and education partners as well as Medway Council. He stated that the inspection found that children felt looked after and cared for in their education settings, but that the recommendations were welcomed and that a SEND Improvement Board had been established to drive forward an Improvement Action Plan which would be completed in May 2018. The Board would be co-chaired by the Portfolio Holder and Chief Nurse, Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to facilitate joint working.

The Portfolio Holder also advised Members that he sat on the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) which had identified an emergence of organised crime, including knife crime and that the Partnership were working to find solutions to these challenges. He advised Members that the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and the Early Years Team were working with families on early identification of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to ensure the right plans were in place to steer children away from crime.

- **SEND Improvement Board** – Further to a question regarding the role and remit of the SEND Improvement Board, the Portfolio Holder advised

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Members that the Board was established as route of governance for the Improvement Plan that the Council and partners were required to produce following the Joint Local Area SEND inspection. He added that whilst each organisation did have their own plans concerning SEN, the Board would create a joint and clear strategic plan for SEN and ensure that the Plan was delivered. The Board had a monitoring role in this respect.

- **EHCPs** – The Portfolio Holder noted that Medway was on track to complete all the conversions of statements to Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) by the mandated deadline.

Referring to the outcome of the joint local area SEND inspection, a Member asked the Portfolio Holder to outline specific actions in the Improvement Plan to address the quality of EHCPs. In response, the Portfolio Holder assured Members that the quality of EHCPs would be improved by engaging with young people as their Plans evolve and by involving their families and the professionals who input into EHCPs. He added that he was working with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Chief Executive Officer to address the challenge of funding with strategic leads in Health.

- **Exclusions** – With reference to Medway's record of permanent and fixed term exclusions and Medway's Strategy document, the Portfolio Holder was asked what action had been taken in conjunction with Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to address exclusions. He advised the Committee that regular meetings were held with the RSC and that he had worked the School Challenge and Improvement Lead (SCILs) Team to ensure a positive and collaborative relationship with the RSC but that the RSC had been challenged. The Portfolio Holder stated that he had provided the Director of Children and Adults Services with examples of how other RSC's had challenged academies which would be shared with the RSC for Medway.
- **Alternative Education Provision** – The Portfolio Holder expressed concern that schools tended to revert to exclusion too quickly and he expressed concern over the current system of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). As a result, he advised Members that he had requested officers to review Medway's alternative education provision and agreed this would be presented to this Committee at a later date. He placed on record his objection to any PRU primary free school as he believed primary aged children should not be in a PRU.
- **Inclusion** - The Portfolio Holder also outlined the new facility for children with hearing impairment at Thomas Aveling School, which would ensure children with hearing difficulties remained in the borough in mainstream school, thereby improving inclusion.
- **SEN school place commissioning** – The Committee was advised that two schools had been challenged through appeal to the Education and

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Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), following commissioning of SEN school places which the school had not provided. This challenge resulted in money in the order of £0.5m being returned to the Council. The Portfolio Holder advised Members that a further school would also be challenged on the same grounds.

- **Children's Centres** – In response to questions on the new model for Children's Centres, the Portfolio Holder advised Members that the new provision had been developed by listening to all the feedback from the consultation and that the provision was within budget. He added that work continues to be completed to embed the new system and that feedback so far had been positive.
- **Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** – The Portfolio Holder noted that Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) was an emerging challenge and gave assurances to the Committee that the Disabilities Team worked closely with the Adoption Team and would continue to do so. He advised the Committee that the 0-25 Team had moved into the Children's Services Directorate and would support the transition of service users into adulthood. A Member outlined the difficulties in diagnosing FASD in young children, to which the Portfolio Holder undertook to request a clinician to provide a briefing note to the Committee on the how diagnosis takes place and the associated challenges.
- **Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)** – Following a question on what preparation was being undertaken in readiness for an inspection, the Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that a specialist had been appointed to support the new inspection regime and a number of measures were being implemented to ensure the Council was ready for an Ofsted inspection, such as a self-assessment and peer review. Members were also advised that the Council was collaborating with other well performing Local Authorities to share good practice. The Portfolio Holder undertook to ask officers to provide all Members with a presentation outlining the new inspection regime outside of the Committee.
- **SEN Home to School Transport Policy proposed amendments** – A Member expressed concerns about the proposed changes to pick up points within the SEN Home to School Transport Policy (item 10 of the agenda refers). With reference to budget pressures and changing demographics, the Portfolio Holder explained that a decision had not yet been made on the proposals and that the feedback from the consultation would be considered. He advised Members that it was important to review the support provided to children throughout their education to ensure that the needs of children were met in the best possible way to ensure they had the best opportunities and were best equipped for adulthood.

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- **Parklands** – In response to a question concerning the number of bedrooms which could be accommodated at Parklands, the Portfolio Holder advised Members that an architect had reviewed the layout and confirmed that six bedrooms could be accommodated. He added that it was hoped that the Aut Even building would be retained for supported accommodation. A Member welcomed the improvements in the quality and quantity of supported accommodation and the Portfolio Holder undertook to include further information on supported accommodation in future reports.
- **Regional Adoption Agency (RAA)** – The Portfolio Holder was asked for an update on the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). He had been advised that government funding would be forthcoming and would likely be in the region of £850,000 shared proportionately between the London Borough of Bexley and Kent County Council. A Member commented that she was pleased with the progress of the RAA and the equal standing of Medway Council within it.
- **Serious case review** – Asked whether the report on the serious case review would be presented to the Committee, the Portfolio Holder explained that the report on the Medway Secure Training Centre had been delayed. However, he advised Members that the Chairman of the Medway Safeguarding Children’s Board (MSCB) would present the outcome of the report to the Committee. The Portfolio Holder undertook to express the Committee’s request to be presented with the report on the serious case review to the Chairman of the MSCB. The Portfolio Holder placed on record his thanks to the Police Crime Commissioner for his support in the serious case review.
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** – A Member expressed concerns in respect of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The Portfolio Holder advised Members that a new service had been commissioned which should be fully mobilised by April 2018. He shared his concerns regarding communication between the new service leads and the timeliness of the mobilisation and set out that a meeting was scheduled, with the lead officer for the contract to discuss these points. The Portfolio Holder gave assurances to the Committee that the new service would deliver the specification that had been commissioned. This specification included earlier and better intervention, as well as easier access for young people and their families, in well located facilities.
- **Achievements of Looked After Children (LAC)** – In response to a question on the wider achievements of Looked After Children (LAC), the Portfolio Holder apologised for the omission within the report presented to the Committee and undertook to include the breadth of achievements of LAC in future reports.
- **Corporate Parenting** – With reference to her experience on the Corporate Parenting Board, a Member commented that children felt

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valued and excited about the opportunities in Medway. In response the Portfolio Holder stated he took his role as a Corporate Parent very seriously and hoped that young people felt he was accessible.

- **Recruitment of adoptive families** – In response to questions regarding the challenges and incentives in relation to the recruitment of adoptive families, the Portfolio Holder recognised that more adoptive families and individuals were required, particularly for complex cases including sibling groups and children with health needs. He advised the Committee that the RAA would provide the critical mass to recruit and encourage people to come forward as adopters. He also advised Members that a new staff member would be recruited within the Children and Adults Services Directorate who would be responsible for marketing for adopters and fosterers. The Portfolio Holder also noted that work with adopters and foster carers was ongoing in terms of identifying additional training needs. In addition, with reference to the Corporate Parenting Board, he added that existing adopters and foster carers expressed they felt supported by the Adoption Team.

Decision:

The Committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member) for his attendance and the answers he had provided.

807 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Educational Attainment and Improvement

Discussion:

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

- Further Education
- Primary and Secondary Educational Improvement
- Safeguarding
- School Organisation and Capital Projects
- School Services (including Admissions and Medway Test)
- Schools Liaison

The Portfolio Holder for Educational Attainment and Improvement, Councillor Martin Potter, responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Key Stage 1 and 2 performance** – A Member congratulated the Portfolio Holder and the wider team for the progress in attainment achieved at Key Stage 1. With reference to the improvements made in attainment at Key Stage 2 set out at paragraph 3.2 (iii) of the report, the Portfolio Holder provided clarification to Members and explained that a breakdown of the statistics to support the statement of achievement was presented in item 7 (Annual School Performance Report) of the agenda.

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- **Results at Key Stage 2 and the impact at Key Stage 4 and 5** – With reference to the impact of attainment at Key Stage 2 on Key Stage 4 and 5, the Portfolio Holder noted that a trend had been identified but he did not accept that attainment at Key Stage 4 was lower as a result.
- **Progress 8 and Key Stage 4 and 5** – In relation to a question concerning a disparity in the attainment achieved by Medway Schools in the Progress 8 measure at Key Stage 4 and the attainment level in English and Maths at Key Stage 4, the Portfolio Holder explained that he had challenged the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) as well as school leaders on the issue and he expected to see improvements. He added that whilst performance in the Progress 8 measure was good, performance in English, Maths, as well as all eight subjects in the attainment 8 Measure also needed to be good.
- **Dynamics, the Medway Music Education Hub** – A Member expressed that he was encouraged to note that Dynamics was to become a Community Interest Company (CIC) and noted that music education in Medway was to a high standard. With reference to music education, the Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that music did not just form part of a broad and balanced curriculum but provided health and wellbeing benefits. He added music education is particularly good in primary schools but that improvements were needed in secondary schools. The Portfolio Holder stated he would be a Director on the CIC Board and looked forward to seeing music education develop. At the request of a Member, the Portfolio Holder undertook to provide the Committee with a copy of the Annual Performance Report of Dynamics as a briefing note.
- **Work programme** – With reference to a request from a Member to receive the Medway Schools' examination results before the March Committee meeting, the Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that whilst the work programme was determined by the Committee, the full break down of the results would not be available until they were validated. He added that before this time some data may be missing and only high level details would be available.
- **Medway Test review** – In response to a question concerning the progress of a review into the Medway Test, the Portfolio Holder explained to the Committee that the Finance Team had undertaken a review and that the results would be presented to the Portfolio Holder in the coming weeks. Thereafter, the recommendations would be implemented. With reference to last year's IT system failure which caused the late release of results, the Portfolio Holder apologised.
- **Further education** – In relation to a question concerning the work of Medway's Further Education provider, Mid Kent College, set out at paragraph 2.2 of the report, the Portfolio Holder confirmed he had visited Mid Kent College and Rivermead School and met with the pupils. He

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commended their excellent work supporting the transition of pupils into college.

- **University Liaison Committee** – In relation to a question asking when the University Liaison Committee last met, the Portfolio Holder explained that the Committee had not met this year but two meetings were held in 2017 and follow up meetings had taken place with Jane Glew (Master for the Medway Campus, University of Kent).
- **Children's University** – With reference to discussions held with Jane Glew, the Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that a new type of Children's University had been discussed which had an academic and curriculum led focus. He undertook to follow up progress on the Children's University with the Director of Children and Adults Services.
- **University engagement** - With respect to other ways the University of Kent engages with Medway's schools, the Portfolio Holder explained that students at the University had volunteered in primary schools and the University also programmed visits to secondary schools. This programme was delivered to students in Year 8 through to Year 13 (Sixth Form). He added that for younger pupils, the University aimed to raise the aspirations of children and develop children's understanding of University. This programme was welcomed by the Portfolio Holder.
- **Primary admissions** – In response to a question concerning the timescale to provide an additional 3000 primary school places, the Portfolio Holder confirmed to the Committee that the 3000 additional school places had already been provided. He also advised Members that there were additional expansion plans for St Mary's Island Primary School, Riverside Primary School and Halling Primary School. The Portfolio Holder stated that as demand rises, the Council would continue to expand and provide school places. He also advised the Committee that sourcing the funding was a challenge owing to being reliant on contributions from developers to top up basic needs funding.
- **Multi Academy Trusts (MATs)** – A Member noted that within the admissions criteria of Multi Academy Trusts there seemed to be a preference towards feeder schools. The Portfolio Holder stated this was not something he supported and added that distance should be the main criteria outside the other main factors.
- **Secondary school admissions** – Asked by a Member about what action could be taken for the 4.5% of children who did not obtain their preferred secondary school place, the Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that a choice of places would continue to be provided to support families obtain a school place of their choice. He added that the provision of new free schools and expanding grammar schools would support this aim.

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- **Medical School** – The Portfolio Holder stated his support for the provision of a Medical School in Medway. The Director of Children and Adults Services advised the Committee that Members were actively involved in supporting a bid for a medical school in Kent and that the bidding process was in its final stages.

Decision:

The Committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for Education and Attainment for his attendance at the meeting and the answers he provided.

808 Annual Report on School Performance 2017

Discussion:

The Committee received a report which provided a comprehensive overview of schools' performance in Medway for the school year 2016-17. The report provided the Committee with the results at each Key Stage for maintained schools and academies, in addition to information on attendance and exclusions for 2015-16 and provisional exclusion data for 2016-17.

The Director of Children and Adults Services noted that the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), Dominic Herrington, was not present at the meeting to answer any questions the Committee might have regarding Medway's academies, this was due to bereavement. The Chairman noted that the RSC would attend the Committee on 5 June.

The School Challenge and Improvement Leads outlined two programmes of activity to improve inclusion and attainment. Firstly, the Committee was advised that the 13 day inclusion programme had been implemented and included:

- 1) working with a national training provider to develop Teaching Assistants;
- 2) training Inclusion Leaders and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) to identify children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), understand the needs of these children and ensuring Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) were high quality;
- 3) instilling alternative behaviour management strategies within schools; and
- 4) assisting schools to manage multi agencies.

The second programme outlined by the School Challenge and Improvement Lead was a transition programme. This programme addressed the transition between Key Stage 2 and 3 with particular reference to vulnerable children.

Members raised a number of points and questions including:

- **Inclusion programme** – In response to a concern regarding the short length of the inclusion training programme for what was considered by a Member to be a complex issue, the School Challenge and Improvement Lead advised the Committee that the classroom teaching spanned six days, but as part of the programme, Inclusion Leaders would visit

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centres of excellence. Inclusion Leaders would also shadow effective leaders in schools that are outstanding for inclusion.

- **Techniques to reduce exclusion** – In response to a question about techniques employed within schools to reduce exclusion, the School Challenge and Improvement Lead explained to the Committee that the inclusion programme encouraged the use of a variety of different approaches to meet a child's specific needs, including time out and time away from peers. She added that the School Challenge and Improvement Team were encouraging schools to think more deeply about the reasons for the behaviour expressed by a child and as a result of this analysis schools were encouraged to motivate an appropriate response.
- **Early intervention** – In response to a question concerning the support provided for children identified as at high risk of exclusion, the Director of Children and Adults Services stressed the importance of support outside school including access to early help programmes.
- **Coasting schools** – Asked by a Member what help was available to coasting schools identified within the report, the Committee was advised that one coasting school was maintained by the Local Authority, the remainder were academies. The School Challenge and Improvement Lead also advised the Committee that officers had liaised with the RSC who had met with the individual schools and Multi Academy Trusts to challenge performance. The performance of the school maintained by the Local Authority had also been challenged.
- **Key Stage 2** – Referring to the improvements in performance made by girls and children with Special Educational Needs, a Member asked what could be learnt. In response, the Committee was advised that a range of training opportunities had been provided to schools to bring them together more coherently and those schools were being facilitated and supported to work closely together. Over the last two years this had resulted in improvements.

Decision:

The Committee thanked the School Challenge and Improvement Leads and noted the Annual Schools' Performance Report set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

809 Outcome of Joint Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection

Discussion:

The Committee received a report which set out the outcome of the joint local area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection undertaken by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) from 4 to 8 December 2017.

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The Director of Children and Adults Services introduced Mary Mason, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children (LAC) and Designated Clinical Officer (DCO), Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Nikki Teesdale Deputy Chief Nurse, Medway CCG. Ms Mason and Ms Teesdale had been invited as representatives of Medway CCG as the Local Authority and CCG were required to submit a joint Written Statement of Action to the Department for Education (DfE) in response to the outcomes of the inspection.

Members raised a number of points and questions including:

- **Monitoring of the Written Statement of Action by the Department for Education (DfE)** – In response to a question concerning actions that the Department for Education (DfE) might take following an unsatisfactory outcome after the 12 month monitoring period, the Head of Integrated 0-25 Disability Services advised the Committee that the DfE could extend the monitoring period or trigger a second inspection.
- **Submission of the Written Statement of Action** – The Director of Children and Adults Services assured the Committee that he was confident that the Written Statement of Action would be submitted within the deadline of 70 working days.
- **Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)** - In response to a question concerning the conversion rate of statements to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), the Head of Integrated 0-25 Disability Services confirmed that the Local Authority was on track to complete the necessary conversions by the deadline of 31 March 2018. She added that the DfE had set Local Authorities a target of 94% and that this percentage recognised that children with statements might move into the area without the knowledge of the Local Authority. In this instance the conversion period was 14 weeks.

Further to a question concerning whether all children with statements would be moved to an EHCP, the Head of Integrated 0-25 Disability Services confirmed that most children had received an EHCP. However, statements had been ceased and therefore no EHCP had been provided where children had opted not to stay in education post 16 and in cases where a child no longer needed the same level of support an EHCP would provide.

- **Diagnosis of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and support** – Members expressed concern over the barriers and time delays in diagnosing children and supporting children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). In response, the Head of Integrated 0-25 Disability Services advised Members that the joint inspection found that identification of SEN in young children was done well. With respect to timely diagnosis of SEN in children, the Designated Nurse for LAC and DCO, Medway NHS CCG, advised the Committee that she had worked with health care professionals and schools to explain the importance of health within EHCPs. She also noted that that she sits on the weekly

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SEN Panel that reviews applications for EHCPs, ensuring there is a focus on health.

The Designated Nurse for LAC and DCO, Medway NHS CCG, outlined for the benefit of Members the challenges in diagnosing Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, (ADHD), Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) including difficulties in assessing children's behaviour and the lack of FASD diagnosticians in the County. She explained that the CCG were working with the Medway Foundation Trust and Medway Community Health to develop a pathway across the agency to follow the NICE Guidelines to support early diagnosis. In addition, she outlined that commissioners were working with the FASD diagnostician to develop a diagnostic team in Medway and that work had been undertaken, jointly with the Local Authority, to train and support schools to challenge behaviours presented by young people and recognise when an application should be made for an EHCP.

With regards to support for children who owing to their level of need do not have an EHCP, the Head of Integrated 0-25 Disability Services explained to the Committee that there was a system of 'top ups' that schools were able to apply for to support these children. She added that this had enabled children to remain supported in mainstream school.

With reference to experience working within schools, a Member commented that accessing the support of healthcare professionals, including the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) had been difficult. The Director of Children and Adults Services advised Members that the child health service and emotional health and wellbeing services had been recommissioned and he recognised the need to improve waiting times, the model and quality of service and that this was set out in the new specifications. He added that the inspectors identified that the new services should improve outcomes for young children and was confident improvements would be made.

Asked by a Member whether the remit of the Deputy Chief Nurse extends to nurseries, the Committee was advised that it would.

- **Task Group** – A Member commented that the joint working referred to within this debate between organisations to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND could form the basis of a future task group in-depth review if additional scrutiny of joint working was required.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the outcome of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Local Area Inspection; and
- b) agreed that a regular update on the progress of the SEND Improvement Plan be presented to the Committee.

810 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2017/18

Discussion:

The Committee received a report which summarised the performance against the delivery of the two priorities within the remit of the Committee set out in the Council Plan 2017/2018 for the third quarter of the year.

The report and accompanying Appendix 1 to the report provided details of performance against these priorities using 17 measures of success. However, this report only included information on 16 measures as data for 1 measure was not expected until after the report was published. The Director of Children and Adults Services outlined key performance indicators which were an ongoing priority for the Directorate, these included:

- Reducing the number of those not in education, employment and training (NEET) and in 'not known' destinations aged 16-19 years;
- Reducing the length of time taken between a child entering care and moving in with an adoptive family; and
- Recruitment and retention of social workers.

In relation to the recruitment and retention of social workers, the Committee was advised that a new package to incentivise applications was in place and had received interest from practice managers and some social workers. It was anticipated that approval of a dedicated microsite and the package of improved training and facilities to enable more agile and mobile working would encourage additional applications.

Members raised a number of points and questions including:

- **Progress 8** – A Member commented that there was a discrepancy between the reported benchmarking of Progress 8 against national performance within the Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and item 6 (Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Educational Attainment and Improvement). Members were advised that this discrepancy owed to a time delay between compiling the reports.
- **Obesity** – A Member expressed disappointment that the performance indicator for obesity was significantly below target. The Director of Children and Adults Services undertook to liaise with the Director of Public Health to provide the Committee with additional commentary on this measure.
- **Adoption** – A Member expressed that caution should be exercised when meeting the adoption targets to ensure no failures occur.

Decision:

The Committee noted the quarter 3 2017/2018 performance against the measures of success used to monitor progress against the Council priorities.

811 Special Educational Needs (SEN) Home to School Transport Consultation and Policy Review

Discussion:

The Committee received a report which outlined the proposed amendments to the Council's Home to School Transport Policy in relation to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and minor consequential amendments and clarifications to the policy for mainstream pupils. The outcome of the consultation was set out in section 6 and 7 of the report.

The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Business and Intelligence drew the Committee's attention to the seven key amendments and clarifications to the policy and emphasised that these proposals were intended to offer flexibility whilst ensuring the Council meets its statutory duties within budget.

Members raised a number of points and questions including:

- **Appeals** - With reference to experience on the Schools Transport Appeals Committee and case examples a Member expressed concern that owing to the change in policy more appeals would be received.
- **'Pick up points'** – With reference to specific needs of children including children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a Member expressed concern over the provision of 'pick up points' and the proposed pilot scheme to work with a small cohort of willing participants to test the effectiveness and viability of the proposal. The Member sought assurances that the pilot scheme would include representation from a cross section of families. The Committee was assured that the proposed policy amendments did not impose the use of 'pick up points' on families, but that the provision of this option would be based around the needs of children and young people and their families and that officers would collaborate with families during the pilot.

The Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead noted that officers had undertaken extensive research into the options utilised by other Local Authorities and that pick up points had been successful elsewhere. It was further explained that not all routes would include pick up points and that officers would work with existing contractors and providers to determine what routes would be most suitable for the inclusion of 'pick up points'. It was added that the use of 'pick up points' would address the issue of children and young people being required to remain on a mode of transport for long periods of time.

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- **Training** – At the request of Members, the Assistant Director Commissioning, Business and Intelligence undertook to offer training to all Councillors on the proposed Policy if it was adopted. This need for training was supported by the Assistant Head of Legal Services.
- **Consultation** – With reference to the feedback from the consultation, a Member expressed concern that respondents expressing the view ‘not sure’ were considered to have agreed with proposals. The Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead explained to the Committee that 132 responses were received to the questionnaire and all of the feedback was set out in the report to ensure that the process was transparent.
- **Drivers of proposed policy amendments** – In relation to a question concerning whether the driver of the proposed Policy amendments was financial, the Assistant Director, Commissioning, Business and Intelligence explained to the Committee that the financial driver was important. However, it was explained there were other motivations for amending the Policy including: providing the least restrictive option for children and young people, providing more choice and personalisation and encouraging young people to develop independence which the existing policy did not encourage.
- **Annual application and review process** – A Member highlighted the concerns of parents set out in the consultation responses within the report in relation to the annual application process. In response, the Committee were advised that this feedback had been considered and officers were developing an online form as part of the Digital Transformation Programme which would streamline the application process and facilitate efficient processing of applications. It was added that the intention of the annual application and review process was not to reassess eligibility, as this was assessed through Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and other processes, but to review the options available to families to develop children and young people and support independence.
- **Co-production** – Following a question enquiring whether families had been included in the formation of the proposals, the Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead explained to Members that officers had worked with the Medway Parents and Carers Forum (MPCF) and an information session was held on 30 January 2018. He added that the next steps would be to set up a focus group to concentrate on the areas of concern e.g. ‘pick up points’.
- **Legal standing** – The Assistant Head of Legal Services reiterated the legal comments set out within the report and stated that the proposals had been reviewed by the Council’s Legal team and Counsel and were considered to be legal. She added that particular focus was given to ‘pick up points’ and ‘post 16 transport, financial contributions’. With reference to the pilot scheme to introduce ‘pick up points’ the Assistant

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Head of Legal Services also advised the Committee that the Policy might be amended following the pilot period.

- **Financial contribution towards travel assistance arrangements for 16 to 18 year olds** – With reference to discussions held at the information session with the MPCF, at the request of a Member, the Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead undertook to include a mechanism within the Policy to enable families to pay the required contribution towards travel assistance arrangements in instalments.
- **The way forward** – A Member commented that in order to take forward the proposed Policy, officers needed to build families' confidence in the proposals.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the proposals to revise the existing Home to School Transport Policy and the outcome of the consultation set out in section 6 and 7 of the report;
- b) noted that officers would include a mechanism within the proposed Education Travel Assistance Policy to enable families to pay the required contribution towards travel assistance for 16 to 18 year olds in instalments;
- c) noted that officers would offer all Councillors training on the new Education Travel Assistance Policy should it be approved by Cabinet on 10 April 2018; and
- d) recommended the proposed Education Travel Assistance Policy, set out at Appendix 3 to the report, to the Cabinet for approval at its meeting on 10 April 2018.

812 Ofsted Inspection of Aut Even

Discussion:

The Committee received a report which set out the findings of the comprehensive inspection undertaken by Ofsted on the Aut Even service between 28 and 29 November 2017. It was stated that Aut Even was now rated as 'good' in all areas.

The Director of Children and Adults Services advised the Committee that an important change had been relocating the management of Aut Even to within Children's Services, under the responsibility of the Head of Provider Services.

The Committee was also advised that the delivery model had been revised, which meant that the capacity of the service had increased and the service was able to take new admissions. It was added that the changes in practice required

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following the previous inspection by Ofsted had been embedded into service delivery and the next steps would be to integrate this service with the services at Parklands.

Members congratulated the Aut Even Team on the latest inspection outcome and raised a number of points and questions including:

- **Inspection judgements** - In response to a question concerning Ofsted's judgement that there were some unresolved issues relating to some staff relationships that undermined consistent and cohesive team working, it was explained that this related to feelings of unsettlement and disruption between existing well established staff and staff who had been newly recruited. It was added that trust had begun to be developed between staff and this was improving.
- **Looked After Children (LAC)** - A Member commented that the report stated that no Looked After Children (LAC) were supported in the Aut Even Service. The Interim Manager Aut Even (Short Breaks Service) clarified that LAC were not excluded from the service and that the children supported by the service were referred by social workers. At present no LAC had been referred.
- **Site closures** - A Member commented that the report did not reference the recent closures of the Aut Even Service owing to inclement weather and refurbishment works and expressed concern that families could not access the service during these times. The Committee was advised that the closures were necessary for the safety of the children supported by the Service and staff members. In reference to the recent weather it was further explained that the closure of the Service was carefully assessed and continually monitored. In addition to safety, consideration was given to the ability to ensure there was sufficient numbers of staff available. The Interim Manager Aut Even (Short Breaks Service) highlighted that the road leading to Aut Even was not gritted and this was unlikely to be passable. The Director of Children and Adults Services advised that Parklands would potentially be more accessible.

Decision:

The Committee noted the work of the service and improvements made and that an update report would be provided to the Committee following the next Inspection by Ofsted scheduled in 2018/19.

813 Work programme

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out the Committee's work programme along with recommended amendments from the Committee's agenda planning meeting on 19 February 2018.

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The Democratic Services Officer advised the Committee that the School Organisation Plan which would ordinarily be presented to the Committee ahead of any decision by the Cabinet to adopt the Plan would be replaced with a School Place Sufficiency Strategy. The new Strategy would take an overarching view of school place planning and school organisation and was scheduled for consideration by the Cabinet in July. It was noted that the Strategy would be complemented with annual reviews highlighting action taken, emerging need and recommendations to ensure a sufficient supply of good quality school places.

Decision:

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

5 June 2018 (provisional date):

- Annual Report on the Children's Social Care Service
- Female Genital Mutilation
- School Place Sufficiency Strategy

31 July 2018 (provisional date):

- Update on the transfer of the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) Service to the Health Visiting Service

7 March 2019 (provisional date):

- Medway Safeguarding Children's Board

Date to be determined:

- Presentation on the Mind of My own (MoMo) app
- Update on the NHS England Commissioned Childhood Immunisation Programme in Medway

Chairman

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