

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

**Thursday, 7 March 2019**

**6.30pm to 9.40pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Aldous, Cooper, Gilry, Johnson, Joy, Kemp, Opara, Purdy, Royle (Chairman) and Wicks (Vice-Chairman)

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

Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church representative) and Fay Cordingley (Church of England Representative)

**Added members without voting rights:**

Thomas Baldock (Medway Youth Council), Roli Enonuya (Medway Youth Council), Nicola Forrest (Head Teacher Representative) and Margaret Cane (Healthwatch Medway CIC Representative)

**Substitutes:**

Councillors:  
McDonald (Substitute for Paterson)  
Griffin (Substitute for Saroy)  
June Patey (substitute for Keith Clear - Medway Parent and Carer Forum)

**In Attendance:**

Kate Ako, Principal Lawyer - People  
Tracey Creaton, Deputy Chief Nurse, NHS Medway CCG  
Ann Domeney, Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services  
Jonathan Duff, Deputy Director, Regional Schools  
Commissioner's Office  
Councillor Andrew Mackness, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services - Lead Member (statutory responsibility, including education)  
Simon Plummer, MSCB Business Manager  
Councillor Martin Potter, Portfolio Holder for Educational Attainment and Improvement  
Detective Supt. Andy Pritchard, Vice Chair, Medway Safeguarding Children's Board  
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer  
Rebecca Smith, School Challenge and Improvement Lead  
Ian Sutherland, Director of People - Children and Adults Services  
David Watkins, Head of Education

**858 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fearn, Paterson and Saroy and from Akinola Edun (Parent Governor representative)

**859 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 10 January 2019 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

**860 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

The Chairman of the Committee, in consultation with the Vice-Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson, had agreed for this item to be added to this meeting as he was of the opinion that it should be considered at this meeting as a matter of urgency as permitted under section 100B of the Local Government Act 1972, to enable the Committee to consider a report of the Ofsted Focused Visit which had recently taken place, at the earliest opportunity. The report had not been available in time for despatch with the main agenda as the publication of the Ofsted findings did not take place until 28 February 2019.

**861 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping**

Disclosable pecuniary interests

Fay Cordingley (Church of England Diocese representative) declared a DPI in item 7 due to her employment at St James' Primary Academy and St Margaret's Junior School but relied on a dispensation that had been granted by the Monitoring Officer, allowing her to participate in the item.

Nicola Forrest (Headteacher) declared a DPI in item 7 due to her employment at New Road Primary School but relied on a dispensation that had been granted by the Monitoring Officer, allowing her to participate in the item.

Other significant interests

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Cooper declared a non-pecuniary interest in 7 (Annual School Performance Report 2017/18) by virtue of her position as governor at Rivermead School

Councillor Joy declared a non-pecuniary interest in 7 (Annual School Performance Report 2017/18) by virtue of his position as governor at Cuxton Primary School

**862 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services - Lead Member (Statutory Responsibility)**

**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 Children Services – Lead Member, 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 responded to Members' questions and comments, which included:

- **Complacency** – A Member raised concern that the report, in their view, was complacent and did not clearly identify real issues facing children's services, such as insufficient Government funding and its impact on service delivery. The Portfolio Holder responded, expressing the view that the report was clear in setting out achievements as well as challenges and action required. He raised concern with the funding provided from Government and explained how he challenged this regularly with local MPs and ministers and added that this needed to be ongoing.
- **Ofsted's Focused Visit** – The Portfolio Holder commented on the recent Focused Visit by Ofsted, which he considered to be an outstanding improvement.
- **Young People's Emotional Wellbeing Services** – In response to a concern raised about the capacity to improve waiting times for the service without adequate resources, the Portfolio Holder expressed his disappointment with the CCG's project management of the previous contract and added that the backlog of cases had been an ongoing challenge. However, he was confident of ongoing improvement.
- **Free School Bid** – in response to a request for an update on the Council's Free School Bid for a special school, the Portfolio Holder explained that the decision had been expected by the end of January 2019 but this had been delayed. It was therefore anticipated to be announced imminently.

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- **Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)** – in response to question regarding issues with updating EHCPs particularly in relation to a lack of participation from NHS agencies, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that Ofsted had challenged the quality of some EHCPs in its inspection into Special Education Needs and Disability Services in 2017. He explained that staff had been working hard to address those issues and stated that the most important factor in the maintenance of EHCPs was communication pathways between schools, families and the local authority and any other partners as relevant. He added that the Director of People – Children and Adults, senior colleagues and himself were working closely with NHS colleagues to address such difficulties.
- **Support for independent nurseries** – in response to a question about what support is provided to independent nurseries, particularly in enabling them to offer the 30 hours child care entitlement for qualifying families, the Portfolio Holder explained that the vast majority of nurseries and pre-schools were independent, however the Council has got in place a dedicated officer to help support nursery providers in developing their organisations and ensuring adequate provision across Medway.
- **Regional Adoption Agency (RAA)** – in response to a concern raised about Kent leading the proposed RAA, the Portfolio Holder explained that he shared concerns about the RAA set up but confirmed that it was something Medway had no choice in being part of due to Central Government policy. He also explained that there would be an officer board and through Medway's representation on that, it would ensure that Medway had a strong voice in the RAA.
- **Out of area placements** – concern was raised about out of area placements and the Portfolio Holder was asked what the future plans for Aut Even were, once services transfer from there to Parklands. In response the Portfolio Holder confirmed that as many children and young people are placed within Medway where it is safe and possible to do so. He added that Parklands was a new facility which would open shortly following fire regulation sign off and Ofsted registration. He explained that decisions around the future of Aut Even had not yet been made but added that he was keen to see it used for a service more appropriate to the building, such as for Care Leavers transitions.
- **Partnership working with NHS partners** – in response to a question about how the Council were looking to encourage greater participation from health organisations the Portfolio Holder explained that officers and himself continued to engage and appropriately challenge NHS partners in partnership collaboration but felt that frequent structural changes and transitions within NHS Medway CCG were contributing to the difficulties and added that he expected more quality input from the CCG into Children's services.
- **Medway Youth Council's annual conference report** – reference was made to the MYC's annual conference report and the findings relating to

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young people generally did not feel safe in Chatham and Gillingham. In response, the Portfolio Holder praised the work of the MYC and reassured Members that gangs and knife crime was a key priority across partners in Medway, adding his view that more needed to be done within education and school settings and that reduced funding to the Police Force and the impact this had on the capacity of a visible police presence added to the challenge.

- **Medway Youth Awards** – clarification was made that this event was run in partnership between Medway Youth Service and Medway Youth Council. The Portfolio Holder added that the event had been hugely successful.

### Decision:

The Committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for Children Services – Lead Member for his attendance.

### 863 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 responded to Members' questions and comments, which included:

- **Funding formula for schools** – in response to a question about the equity of funding nationally and how Medway compared to other local authorities, the Portfolio Holder explained that Medway had seen a 5% increase in funding in Medway but noted that other areas with similar demographic make up and challenges were receiving significantly more and he therefore would continue to make the case for additional funding for Medway's children and young people.
- **Progress in school performance** – in response to a comment made about progress across key stages the Portfolio Holder explained that performance across the key stages was improving and thanked, schools, the School Challenge and Improvement Team and all involved in driving up standards in school performance.

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- **Exclusion rates** – in response to a comment about Medway’s rate of exclusions being higher than the national average, the Portfolio Holder commented on a detailed inclusion programme, funded via the Regional Schools Commissioner’s Office, which was providing targeted support to 20 schools and academies in Medway with the highest exclusion rates. This work had contributed in a reduction in Medway’s rates from the rates recorded for the previous year, against an increase nationally.
- **Skills Strategy** – in response to a question about the progress with the Skills Strategy, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that it had been approved at Cabinet earlier that week. He added that the Government had recently strengthened the requirement of schools to provide students with independent information, advice and guidance (IAG) services
- **Provision of Grammar School Places** – in response to a query about the sufficient provision of grammar school places, the Portfolio Holder explained that due to rises in population the demand on grammar school places (which accounted for 25% of all secondary school places), was growing. Expansions to current provision had or was planned to take place across a number of grammar schools but this continued to be a challenge and approaches would need to be made to the Government for funding to further increase capacity.
- **Capacity in the education system for continued improvement** – in response to a concern raised about the capacity for continued improvement, particularly in relation to the cohort of students who had previously not reached expected attainment at Key stage 2, the Portfolio Holder explained that the entire sector were working together and that discussions between school leaders, the Regional Schools Commissioner and others provided assurance that improvement would continue.
- **Board of Dynamics** – reference was made to the Board of Dynamics and it was clarified that Medway was one of the top three performing hubs.

### Decision:

The Committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for Educational Attainment and Improvement for his attendance.

## 864 Annual Report on School Performance 2017-18

### Discussion:

The Head of Education introduced the report which provided validated data relating to each Key Stage for all schools and provided information on attendance and exclusions. The Deputy Director from the Regional Schools Commissioner’s (RSC) Office was also present for this item and expressed his thanks to the local authority for the collaborative working between the two agencies.

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

- **Attainment of Pupil Premium Students** – in response to a question about the gap in attainment between students eligible for pupil premium funding and those that are not, the Deputy Director from the RSC Office confirmed that this was an area of focus and academies were supported in putting in appropriate strategies to address the issue, with a clear Leadership and Governance focus. The School Challenge and Improvement Lead added that School Leaders were very conscious of the various groups of young people in their school and that the gap at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 had narrowed at a faster rate than previously. Identification of pupil premium children as they start school was key and there were good innovative practices in relation to this which were being shared with colleagues across schools. The point was also made that to fully address underperformance for this cohort of children, development in the community was required to support these children and young people in all settings.
- **Children not in education, employment and training (NEETs)** – in response to a question about the statistics relating to NEETs, the Deputy Director, Children and Adults explained that performance had recently improved significantly with the total number of young people who were NEET or destination not known now being at 6.5%, which was attributable to targeted work in monitoring young people and with schools, since bringing the IAG service back in house.
- **Coasting schools** – in relation to a comment about coasting schools the Deputy Director from the RSC Office confirmed that this was no longer a definition used to define intervention but would instead be used as a measure to trigger additional support for coasting schools.
- **Collaborative working on school improvement** – officers were asked to provide more detail in how the local authority and the RSC office work together in supporting schools to improve performance. Officers confirmed that collaborative working took place with clear lines of communication and respectful two way challenge between both departments. Meetings, as well as conference calls took place to ensure good dialogue took place in working together to support schools requiring rapid improvement. The point was made that maintained schools generally outperformed academies in the primary sector and in response the Deputy Director from the RSC Office confirmed that a number of academies had been converted because of poor performance and were now catching up on performance, with many having started from a lower base line..
- **School data that reflects challenges** – concern was raised about how school performance data was provided which did not necessarily reflect the challenges of particular schools, for example, those with very high numbers of children with special educational needs or high levels of pupil premium. Officers undertook to consider ways of better reflecting this in future reports.



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- **Performance gaps in relation to ethnicity** – comment was made about the underperformance of white boys. In response the School Challenge and Improvement Lead explained that quality first teaching was key, along with ensuring curriculums were purposeful and motivating.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the report and thanked the Deputy Director from the Regional Schools Commissioner's Office for his attendance.

## 865 Medway Youth Council - Annual Conference Findings

### Discussion:

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Medway Youth Council (MYC) introduced the report which detailed the findings and outcomes of the MYC Annual Conference held in November 2018, which was entitled 'Are You[TH] Safe?'. It was explained that there were three workshops at the event and the key findings from each were summarised along with some recommended action, all of which was detailed in the report attached at Appendix 1.

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

- **Dissemination of the report** – in response to a question about how the MYC intended to share its report and findings, the MYC Chairman explained that it would be sent to all Headteachers of Medway Schools and MYC members would be asked to ensure the findings are distributed within the schools they represent. He also welcomed the suggestion for MYC to go into other schools to deliver the information.
- **Young people's relationship with themselves and body image** – comment was made about supporting young people who also have an unhealthy relationship with themselves and their body image and whether MYC planned to look into this topic in the future. The MYC Chairman confirmed that although this hadn't specifically been considered at the conference, he recognised its importance and undertook to look at including support for this issue in the resources being developed to support young people.
- **Young People feeling unsafe** – comment was made about the statistics in relation to the number of delegates who said they had seen a knife/sharp object in their school (51%) and the number of delegates who believed Medway had a gang problem (82%). The MYC Chairman echoed this concern, adding that 38% of delegates who said they would do nothing if they saw drugs at their school was another serious issue. In relation to the percentage of people who believed there to be a gang issue in Medway, he added that this was perception but still needed addressing and felt the conference had provided an opportunity to highlight these important issues. In response to a question about what the Council was doing to alleviate these concerns, the Deputy Director stated that limited funding had been



made available through the Youth Offending Team and Kent Police to tackle violence and gangs.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report and thanked the Medway Youth Council for their work.

## **866 Proposed Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements**

### **Discussion:**

The Director of People – Children and Adults introduced the report which set out the emerging proposals for the new safeguarding partnership arrangements for children in Medway in accordance with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and associated statutory guidance. He highlighted the key aspects and changes to the proposed arrangements, which were set out in the report, and welcomed the representatives from NHS Medway Clinical Commissioning Group and Kent Police, who were also present to answer questions.

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

- **Independent role** – A number of members expressed concern about the loss of the Independent Chair, which was no longer a requirement. The Director of People – Children and Adults explained that all three partners were keen to retain an independent scrutineer, which was permitted under the new arrangements. The Chairman role of the new Partnership would be rotated between the three lead organisations who all held statutory responsibility and could evidence their commitment through clear leadership. In terms of selection for the Independent Scrutineer, officers were liaising with the Association of Independent Chairs for advice and support with this.
- **Visits to Cookham Wood** – in response to a question about whether planned and or unplanned visits would take place at Cookham Wood, officers confirmed that arrangements were in place already for such visits and to respond urgently to ad hoc events. Although access was controlled, unannounced visits were possible.
- **Proposed structure** – The Kent Police representative clarified that the proposed Executive would be the main business forum ensuring the partnership maintains its main focus and strategic priorities and would be led by the three safeguarding partners. The Leadership Group would be the large group providing the ability for wider partnership engagement through a conference setting.
- **Voice of children and young people** – in response to how the voice of children would be captured and its impact measured, the Director of People – Children and Adults explained that this was still under review but it would be through a range of various networks. Consideration was also being

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given to how the voice of younger children and parents could be captured. Part of the Independent Scrutineer's role would be to challenge and ensure this was being captured and listened to.

- **Relevant Agencies** – officers supported a recommendation that Open Road be included in the list of relevant agencies due to the support they provide in relation to substance misuse and the common link this has with safeguarding issues.
- **Funding to tackle gang and knife crime** – in response to a request for more detail on this, the Kent Police representative explained that a Kent and Medway £1.3m bid had been successful in relation to tackling gangs and violent crime, with a particular focus to those gangs disseminating from London through County lines. Detail on exactly how the funding would be used was unavailable but it was confirmed that early intervention support, preventative work and education through schools would be included in the project.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the proposed timeline for consultation and approval set out at paragraph 7.2 of the report.

## 867 Draft Medway Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2024

### Discussion:

The Deputy Director introduced the report which set out the draft Children and Young People's Plan, including the key strategic priorities for partnership action to improve outcomes for Medway's children and young people and help them achieve their potential. She highlighted the three key outcomes detailed in the plan, along with key priorities and actions, which were all detailed in the plan, attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

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

- **Attendance at Children and Family hubs** – in response to a comment made about attendance at the hubs, officers confirmed that work was underway to capture data about attendance and usage of the Children and Family Hubs to measure success.
- **Deliverability of the plan's ambitions** – in response to a concern raised about the deliverability of the aims and priorities in the plan, particularly those relating to 0-5 year olds, the Deputy Director confirmed that the plan was for all partners and that the universal offer was delivered across organisations, including the community and voluntary sector. Signposting to ensure people get the service they need was paramount.
- **Participation of Children and Young People in the Plan** – in response to a question about participation, officers confirmed that this was a draft plan

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which would be consulted on in a meaningful way and would run for a minimum of six weeks. Officers also undertook to strengthen in the plan the voice of children and young people and its impact.

- **Youth Service Offer** – in response to a question about how young people from low income families could be supported to access and engage in youth services and activities, officers confirmed that the Youth Service was very successful and played a key role in engaging young people and occupying them, which helped prevent them from engaging in gangs and crime. It was added that Looked After Children received free access to leisure centre facilities.
- **Community and Voluntary Sector** – building on from the role the community and voluntary sector play in youth service provision, comment was made about the wide range of support services available in the community and voluntary sector for families, including those more vulnerable or harder to reach communities and it was important to be inclusive with all organisations to work in partnership to deliver the best outcomes for all children and young people.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the planned consultation with children and young people and other stakeholders as outlined in section 5 of the report, which would be reported back to the Cabinet when it considers a final CYPP for approval.

## **868 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2018/19**

### **Discussion:**

The Committee considered the report which set out the Council's performance in quarter 3 on the delivery of the two priorities relevant to this Committee: supporting Medway's people to realise their potential and maximising regeneration and economic growth.

In reference to the measures relating to healthy weight, a question was raised about the opening times of hot food outlets near schools and requirements for food suppliers to school to provide healthy food. Officers confirmed that Supplementary Planning Guidance was in place to restrict the opening of new fast food outlets opening close to school grounds. In relation to food suppliers in schools, officers undertook to provide a briefing note.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

**869 Outcome of Ofsted's Focused Visit**

**Discussion:**

The Director of People – Children and Adult Services and the Deputy Director, Children and Adults introduced the report which informed the Committee of the key findings from Ofsted's recent Focused Visit on the Council's Children's Services Front Door and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) services. They highlighted the key findings of the focused visit, which were set out at section 3 of the report and were largely positive, acknowledging marked improvement and sustained progress.

The report did identify that participation and contribution of health partners in strategy meetings, timeliness of contacts and referrals sent by the Police, as areas for improvement. A Member asked how officers intended on working with health partners to further engage. Officers responded that they were holding a series of conversations with health colleagues on a number of issues but expected timely improvement on this by the NHS as the letter from Ofsted made clear the urgency required in addressing this issue.

**Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

**870 Work programme**

**Discussion:**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which advised Members of the current work programme.

**Decision:**

- (1) The Committee agreed the work programme as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.
- (2) The Committee recommended the Council to appoint Geoffrey Matthews to the position for a non-voting Teacher on the Committee for a two year term.

**871 Vote of thanks**

Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to the Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Royle who was standing down at the forthcoming local elections. He had been Chairman of the Committee for 13 years, apart from one year during which he was Mayor of Medway. Members also expressed their thanks to another member of the Committee, Councillor Gilry, who was also a long serving Councillor standing down in the forthcoming local elections who had also served on the Committee for many years.

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**Chairman**

**Date:**

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