

## **Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee**

18 January 2023 – At a meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Linehan (Chairman)

Cllr Baldwin	Cllr Mercer	Mr Cristin, Joined
Cllr Burgess	Cllr Payne	11.12am
Cllr Cherry	Cllr Smith	Cllr Evans
Cllr Cornell	Cllr Sparkes	Cllr Nagel

Apologies were received from Cllr Duncton, Cllr Hall, Cllr McGregor and Mrs Oldroyd

Also in attendance: Cllr N Jupp and Cllr Russell

### **34. Declarations of Interests**

34.1 In accordance with the County Council's code of conduct the following declarations were made:

34.2 Cllr Mercer declared a personal interest as the chair of the Orchard Hill Academy Trust under agenda item 5.

34.3 Cllr Linehan declared a personal interest as a parent of a child with an EHCP under agenda item 5.

34.4 Cllr Smith declared a personal interest as the parent of a child with an EHCP under agenda item 5.

### **35. Urgent Matters**

35.1 The Chairman asked the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills to update the Scrutiny Committee on how the County Council was reacting to planned industrial action by members of the National Education Union.

35.2 On behalf of the Cabinet Member, Mr Wagstaff, Assistant Director Education and Skills, advised the Committee that the Department for Education (DfE) had produced guidance for schools on how to manage the impact of the strike action with priority to be given to vulnerable children. Union members did not have to inform the school in advance of any industrial action they planned to take but it was hoped they would do so to enable headteachers to plan. There could be some impact on learning, but it was hoped that work could be set for home learning as it had been in the pandemic period.

### **36. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee**

36.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **37. Responses to Recommendations**

37.1 The Committee noted the responses to the recommendations provided from recent meetings.

37.2 The Chairman thanked Cllr Mercer for volunteering to be the scrutiny committee's representative on the SEND Strategy Board and agreed to find out the details of the next meeting.

### **38. Education and Learning Strategy 2023-2025**

38.1 The Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills, Cllr N Jupp, introduced the report highlighting that this was an exciting piece of work which would impact on the future prospects of all children. Cllr Jupp welcomed the recommendations made by the CYPSSC Task and Finish Group, which had looked at the draft strategy and made some recommendations. During the last year the lack of Government definitive policy guidance meant that the strategy would be a dynamic on-line document which could be reviewed and updated in the light of any future changes and areas could come back to the Committee for comment and discussion as required.

38.2 Members of the Committee thanked officers for the work done and made comments and asked questions, a summary of those questions and answers follows.

38.3 It was recognised that the word 'upon' needed adding to the end of the sentence in paragraph 25 of the Strategy and that the strategies referred to in paragraph 26 of the Strategy (both on page 43 of the agenda pack) would be in the Children's First Strategy Plan.

38.4 There was no mental health strategy, but the service did have action plans as well as a mental health team. Additionally, all social workers received mental health training. The inaugural meeting of a Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Board, which had recently been set up across schools, and involving health partners, would take place in March 2023.

#### **Theme 1**

38.5 Aspirations on the performance of all young people were built into the plan but also via the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Council Plan. The County Council's performance was in line with statistical neighbours which Members were pleased to hear but did not feel was reflected in the report.

38.6 **Workstream 2** - During the Covid pandemic some **early years** settings were open to Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils. A number of independent early years settings had since either failed Ofsted inspections or ceased trading due to financial pressures. A peer review of early years had been undertaken by the Local Government Association and the findings report was awaited. The outcome of the review would help shape the early years strategy and the support of early years provision,

recognising this as a priority area of focus. The wording of the workstream would be expanded, including the addition of metrics and KPIs, to reflect this with more detail. **Action:** The Assistant Director agreed to provide the figures of the number of early years settings in the county both before and after the pandemic.

38.7 The workstream monitoring reports would be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Education and Learning Strategy Partnership Board. **Action:** The Assistant Director (Education and Skills) agreed to share quarterly monitoring reports with the Committee.

38.8 **Workstream 3** – Work would be undertaken on ensuring smooth transitions with some investment in early years staff to offer support, but also for transitions from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and from Key Stage 4 to post-16 provision.

38.9 Committee Members were keen to know if there were any up-to-date figures for **school readiness** and how they might have informed the strategy and so that the Committee could know what the starting point was for children. **Action:** The Assistant Director (Education and Skills) confirmed that the most recent figures available were from Summer 2022 and agreed to share them with Members.

38.10 **Workstream 4** – Committee Members asked that the wording be expanded to include reference to **differentiation and adaptive teaching** within both the workstream and KPI.

## **Theme 2**

38.11 **Workstream 1** – Research had been undertaken on primary school outcomes on how disadvantaged pupils were doing and it had shown some anomalies. It was possible to raise attainment for disadvantaged young people but often a gap remained as other pupil attainment also rose. It was important that disadvantaged pupils reached thresholds which allowed them to take advantage of other opportunities. **Action:** More information be provided to Committee Members on the current position and the barriers to improvement.

38.12 **Workstream 2** – The metrics for this workstream is based on the information already available on young people **not in education, employment or training (NEET)**. Work would need to be done on how to gather information on the other groups of children mentioned, where there is no existing national data mechanism.

38.13 **Workstream 3** – The numbers of parents electing to **home educate** their children had risen in West Sussex as it had nationally. West Sussex also had 21 children return to schools in the Autumn term. Where officers are concerned with the arrangements for the most challenging of cases, they could transfer pupils to the Children Missing Education Register (CMER) where the local authority had more statutory powers to help.

### **Theme 3**

38.14 **Workstream 2** – Members raised concern that the performance target for the number of EHCPs delivered within 20 weeks was at 49% when this was a statutory duty. It was acknowledged that in 2019 the County Council had been achieving 70% of assessments in time (compared to the national average of 60%). Since then, there had been a 70% increase in the requests for EHCPs in West Sussex, which combined with difficulties securing educational psychologists to undertake the assessments and pressures on the NHS delaying health assessments, had caused outstanding cases numbers to rise. However, the average time taken to complete an assessment had reduced. Resources such as advice lines were being put in place to help parents before an EHCP assessment might be needed. It was agreed that the target could be set at the highest level but there would need to be a set of milestones to be achieved over a period of time to achieve that level.

### **Theme 4**

38.15 Under item 40 that the word 'pedagogies' be replaced with 'teaching and learning approaches'.

### **Theme 5**

38.16 **Workstream 1** – Committee Members asked that the wish to use potential surplus primary places to support the requirement for increased special needs places be reflected into this workstream.

38.17 The Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills, Cllr N Jupp, thanked the Committee for their compliments about the report and for the points made.

38.18 Resolved – That the Committee:

1. Thanks officers for the huge amount of work undertaken in producing a comprehensive and thorough Strategy and welcomes that the comments from the CYPSSC Task and Finish Group have been incorporated.
2. Recognises that KPIs and targets for all workstreams will be added to the workstream delivery document as work progresses and that this is important so the performance and delivery of the strategy can be monitored.
3. Asks that the service ensures that the KPIs and targets in the workstream delivery document are ambitious enough to meet the aspirations as set out in the strategy. In particular, the workstream for EHCP timelessness and asks that milestones are included.
4. Asks that the quarterly performance of the Strategy delivery is shared with the Committee through the Business Planning Group.
5. Would welcome exploration of further measures and targets for raising attainment for other groups of children and young people.

6. Requests that Workstream 4 in Theme 1 is amended to include reference to adaptive teaching.
7. Asks officers to consider including in Theme 5 the aspiration to create more SEND places in mainstream schools.
8. Requests to see the current figures around school readiness to assess if there any areas for future scrutiny.

### **39. Commissioning of an Adult Community Education Service**

39.1 The Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills, Cllr N Jupp, introduced the pre-decision report highlighting that it was good timing following the previous contractor having recently ceased trading.

39.2 The Assistant Director Education and Skills informed the Committee that it had always been the intention to look at the next phase of commissioning for community learning and it made sense to look at alongside the Multiply Maths project for adults to make the best use of grants available. The decision report for the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills, Cllr Jupp, is the beginning of procurement process and the mission statement included Annex 1 was the key driver for what the service wanted for the future.

39.3 Members of the committee asked questions and a summary of those questions and answers follows.

39.4 A member asked about information that had previously been requested on the number of people in West Sussex who could not read. It was reported that it had been difficult to get accurate data as the most recent study was dated 2011, so work had taken place on the exit data of pupils at Key Stages 4 and 5. It was felt it was relevant to collate this data anyway as it could feed into skills agenda and give the opportunity to control future provision to offer a curriculum. A briefing would be shared with Committee members as soon as possible.

39.5 Members challenged how the County Council could increase participation in adult community education. Officers reported it was hoped that the model proposed would give the ability to respond to specific localised areas of learning, to target communities that needed support and to be able to target curriculums to specific groups of learners.

39.6 To ensure all providers gave the same high-quality service there would be a rigorous procurement process which included a quality assurance framework. Community learning would be subject to Ofsted inspections and the County Council's quality assurance framework would enable the opportunity to support providers who did not meet the service standard. There would be a contract provision that failing to meet the required standards could result in contracts being stopped and learners moved, along with their funding, to other providers.

39.7 Members asked if there would be sufficient providers in the market? Soft market testing in 2020 had shown there was a range of providers in

the market. At this stage there would be no engagement with employers as there was a desire to align learning for work with the skills agenda.

39.8 Members questioned the use of zero-hour contracts given the current challenging employment market and suggested that their use be minimalised. Officers reported that these would be used as a way of building an inhouse team quickly, with flexibility and that many tutors welcomed that option of employment.

39.9 Members asked why in the breakdown of resources allocated some 20% were not accounted for. Officers reported that if all the funding were allocated out to providers for training, then the County Council would have to retain the management of the contracts.

39.10 The proposed model would allow providers to give the right learning environment for the learner. That may not be a traditional classroom scenario but a mix of learning where there could also be family or community-based learning.

39.11 Officers reassured that those learners who had had their training stopped due to the previous provider ceasing trading, were being worked with through the administrators to keep the learning flowing. Unfortunately, at this point, funding could not be transferred. It was hoped to get all 70 learners back on track under the new procurement by September 2023. Members asked for assurances that those learners impacted would not be disadvantaged and officers agreed to check the technicalities and confirm the position with the Committee.

39.12 Resolved – That the Committee:

1. Supports the proposed new delivery model as outlined in the draft decision report, recognising the advantage of the service designing the curriculum to increase learner take up and the use of a multi-provider model.
2. Recognises that the quality and effectiveness of learning by providers is key and welcomes the mechanisms proposed within the procurement process for this.
3. Raises concern on the proposal for zero-hour contracts for tutors and suggests that these are only used when absolutely necessary.
4. Welcomes that there is flexibility on the split across different learning and skills areas so that it can be adapted to meet the needs of residents.
5. Asks that an outline of the previous split of the adult education budget is shared with the Committee.
6. Asks for clarification that learners who were unable to complete courses will be able to access funding to complete their courses.

#### **40. Work Programme Planning and Possible Items for Future Scrutiny**

40.1 The Chairman agreed to review with the Business Planning Group and officers how the consultation into the review of primary aged pupil provision in Worthing could be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee.

#### **41. Requests for Call-In**

41.1 There had been no request for call-in to the Scrutiny Committee within its constitutional remit since the date of the last meeting.

#### **42. Date of Next Meeting**

42.1 The next meeting would be held on 1 March 2023 at 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 12.43 pm

Chairman