

Notes

of the Informal Virtual Meeting of the

Children & Young People Services Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday 30 June 2021

held via Microsoft Teams

Meeting Commenced: 10.00 am Meeting Concluded: 12:20 pm

Councillors:

P Wendy Griggs (Chairman)

P Steve Hogg (Vice Chairman)

P Marc Aplin

P Geoff Richardson

P Mark Crosby

A Ann Harley

P Ruth Jacobs

P Lisa Pilgrim

A Richard Westwood

P Caroline Cherry

P Ciarán Cronnelly

Hugh Gregor

P Nicola Holland

P Huw James

Tim Snaden

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

Other Councillors in attendance: Catherine Gibbons

Officers in attendance: Carolann James, Mike Newman, Michèle Chesterman, Brent Cross, Katherine Sokol, Sally Varley, Sheila Smith, Sindy Dube, Naomi Addicott

Right to Speak: Kenton Mee, North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together (The Parent Carer Forum in North Somerset)

CAY Election of Vice-Chairman for the 2021/22 Municipal Year

Recommended: that Councillor Hogg be elected as Vice-Chairman for the 2021/22 municipal year - to be ratified at the formal Panel meeting on 21 October 2021.

CAY Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 March 2021 (Agenda item 3)

Concluded: that the minutes of the last meeting held on the 11 March 2021 be recommended as a correct record - to be ratified at the formal panel meeting on 21 October 2021.

CAY Chairman's Update on CYPS Panel Working Groups (Agenda item 5)

An update was provided on the Children's Improvement Focus Group which last met on 19 April 2021 to receive a presentation from officers on the development of the Children's Improvement Plan. At the next meeting in September 2021 the focus group would be looking at the new front door. The Chairman thanked officers for the opportunity to look through a case audit.

Members were informed that the next meeting of the CAMHS Working Group would take place on 8 July 2021 which would be focussed around a gap analysis around children's mental health would be discussed.

Concluded: that Panel members receive the oral report on the update on CYPS panel working groups.

CAY Annual Directorate Statement – Children's Services (Agenda item 6)

The Director of Children's Services presented the report. Members were informed that each year the directorates within North Somerset Council produced an Annual Directorate Statement (ADS). The ADS translated the commitments in the North Somerset Corporate Plan into a series of directorate level commitments.

Members noted that many of the commitments linked directly to the Children's Improvement Plan and the Action Plan that was compiled following the Local Joint Area Review (LJAR) of the special educational needs and disabilities services and it also encompassed the Education Commissioning Strategy which had been to CYPS and also agreed at the Executive. It also brought together some of the broader commitments particularly in relation to refugees, asylum seekers and families settling in North Somerset. In determining the future workplan of the CYPS Panel it was suggested that Members may wish to decide which particular commitments should form the basis for future performance reporting to the Panel.

In discussing the report the Director of Children's Services responded to questions and queries from Members in relation to integrated care systems, the importance of the inclusion of school transport in the CYPS Panel's remit, performance management targets.

Concluded:

- (1) that the panel receive and consider the report;
- (2) that the panel decide which, if any, of the Children's Services Directorate's commitments should be the subject of further detailed reports at future meetings;
- (3) that the panel consider and agree the Work Plan

CAY Multi-agency Response to the SEND Re-visit (Agenda item 7)

The Director of Social Services presented the report. Members noted that Ofsted & CQC visited North Somerset during May 2018 to inspect Local Area SEND services. These visits, or Local Joint Area Reviews (LJAR), did not deliver a grading or overall judgement, but provided a narrative response. This response included 'areas of significant weakness' (ASWs) in which improvement was required by the statutory agencies in the Local Area and their partners. LAs, as the lead agency for SEND, were then required to submit a Written Statement of Action (WSA) which detailed the plans to address these areas.

A revisit to North Somerset was widely expected to take place during March-May 2020, however Ofsted ceased inspection activity when the initial Covid restrictions were implemented. While the inspection did not expressly consider the Council's Covid response in terms of SEND services, the impact of the pandemic on North Somerset's progress and on the experience of parents, carers and families was part of discussions with the Inspection Team.

The Director of Social Services informed Members that at the time of writing the report the letter following on from the re-visit in regard to the Council's arrangement for children with special needs and disabilities had not been received. It was published on Monday 28 June 2021. Members were provided with the following link: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50165308>

After providing Members with detail on the Ofsted feedback, the Director of Social Services reported that the conclusion was that against the original eight areas in the written statement of action, North Somerset as a local area (not local authority), sufficient progress had been made against only two areas. As a result, North Somerset would be required to produce an accelerated progress plan and access support from the DfE. The DfE and NHS England would continue to monitor the Authority (as they had done since 2018) meeting with the Council, the CCG and others and attending SEND Programme Board meetings.

The inspectors noted that progress had been made in all areas and that in some instances it was significant however, the pace of change had not been swift enough meaning that the impact of changes and improvements for children and families was not yet fully in evidence. The inspector had indicated that if the visit had taken place a few months later there would have been more progress.

Members were informed that since the re-visit the SEND Programme Board had convened a number of additional meetings and had identified areas where there would be quicker wins (including the development of an online portal) where progress could be accelerated and tailored support with some of the other ones.

In discussing the report Members asked and received clarification in relation to there being no financial implications. The offer of support was made if required including more resources. Members were reassured that the Executive had agreed a permanent Assistant Director post with interviews being held week commencing 5 July 2021. There had also been additional

money in the last year to bolster the SEND team. Advice was also being sought from one of the individuals who undertook the LGA peer review. Reference was also made to the Inclusion Summit convened with Multi Academy Trust colleagues and the fact that they signed an Inclusion Charter.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman thanked officers for their work on the SEND review.

Concluded:

- (1) that the Panel receives details of the process following the LJAR revisit;
- (2) that the Panel consider the letter published by Ofsted following on from the SEND re-visit.

CAY Winterstoke Hundred Academy Expansion Progress Update (Agenda item 8)

The Panel received a presentation from the Senior Projects Manager, Major Projects on the Winterstoke Hundred Academy Expansion Progress Update. Members were informed that the project entailed an extension to the existing Winterstoke 100 Academy run the Cabot Learning Federation (CLF) multi-academy trust. It was expected that the new building would house year 7-11 and the existing building would house further education students. There would be some overlap. CLF were working to timetable the children's day to avoid them having to travel between sites. In relation to the HIF bid and timing the build was required to be completed by March 2024.

The Senior Projects Manager, Major Projects reported that:

- The planning application had been submitted (which was currently within a 3 month consultation period) and could be accessed on the Council's planning portal;
- archaeological excavations were due to begin in July 2021 on site and would be completed mid August 2021;
- The diversion of services was underway, currently waiting on a schedule of works to include in the programme;
- The Council was engaging with the DfE to agree sign off as per the GDA requirements. The Employers Agent was pulling together a cost plan as required by DfE – division of funding and general milestone requirement;
- Ongoing discussions were taking place with St Modwen's regarding the land transfer and recharging S106 costs. Lack of engagement from St Modwen's meant that there had been an inability to agree on the way forward so the Council may need to trigger the 3 month notice period.

The key tasks for the month ahead were outlined to members as follows:

- To agree a way forward regarding the land transfer – either by agreement with St Modwen’s or by triggering S106 period;
- To oversee the planning application;
- To begin preparation for the construction contract

Panel members received clarification on a number of issues including the scope of the project; pressures on the budget and the amount of the contingency. Members were informed that In terms of value engineering anything that was not essential had been removed with a view that it could be introduced at a later stage if the budget was available.

Members were directed to the Education Provision in North Somerset Commissioning Strategy 2021/24 for further information on schooling and the Winterstoke 100 Academy Expansion which was presented to the Executive on 23 June 2021:-

<https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s1094/11%20Draft%20Education%20Provision%20in%20North%20Somerset%20-%20A%20Commissioning%20Strategy%202021%202024.pdf>

Concluded: that the Panel receive and consider the update on the Winterstoke Hundred Expansion.

CAY Performance Monitoring (Agenda item 9)

The Interim Assistant Director, Children’s Services and Safeguarding presented the report. It was reported that the CYPS Panel received regular performance management reports to help members to evaluate the extent to which the council and its partners were achieving key plans and objectives for children and young people’s services and to provide appropriate challenge and suggestions to improve performance.

The report presented the following standard items: any recent Ofsted inspections of council services; an analysis of the performance of the relevant Key Corporate Performance Indicators (KCPIs) for Quarter 1 2020/21, that fall under the remit of the Panel; an overview of the performance of various Key Service Measures for Support and Safeguarding services within the council.

Members were provided with a summary of the highlights of the report including:-

- Areas rag rated red – care leavers and education, employment and training;
- Areas of strength – low levels of contacts and referrals compared to our comparators; low levels of re-referrals; child in need, child protection and children in care numbers,
- Children’s stability and foster carers. The Authority had been very successful in increasing the number of foster carers. The challenge now was to continue to do that.

Members were informed that at the March Panel meeting reference was made to the fact that work was being carried out to improve performance reporting. This work was ongoing. The Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services and Safeguarding was liaising with the Business Intelligence Team and the DfE Advisor to ensure that format would be improved to include data on exclusions and CAMHS.

In discussing the report Members thanked the Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services and Safeguarding for the detailed information which aided understanding and obtained clarification in relation to the Child Poverty Indicators; domestic violence; statistics on children on free school meals; target numbers, benchmarking and data for previous years.

It was reported that a briefing would be provided for Members in the autumn of 2021 to aid understanding of the children's services performance data, direction of travel and RAG rating.

Concluded:

- (1) that the Panel receive the report;
- (2) that the Panel comment on areas for improvement and areas of good performance;
- (3) that the Panel receive a briefing in autumn 2021 on children's services performance data.

CAY Month 12 Children's Services Budget Monitor (Agenda item 10)

The Senior Service Accountant, Corporate Services, provided a summary of the main highlights of the report. Members were reassured that overall Children's Services closed the year with a £700k underspend to budget. Members' attention was drawn to the second page of the report which provided an overview to the budget. The Council was able to meet all of its Covid 19 related cost pressures from a combination of government specific grants and some reduced spend within services as a direct result of Covid 19.

One of the main areas of underspend was placements for children looked after. A table in paragraph 3.7 provided an overview of the position by the main placement types. There was an underspend to budget of just over £400k. When compared to 2019/20 the position was even more favourable and spend reduced by over 860k 2020/21. The main factor driving the situation was the number of children looked after. In 2019/20 the numbers peaked at 245 whilst during 2020/21 the numbers were at a peak of 225. This was a significant reduction as some of the Council's placement types had very high unit costs.

Members noted one of the other main variances was staffing with an underspend of just over £700k. Members were informed that some of the underspend would be a one-off because some of the Council's services such as children's centres and nurseries were impacted by Covid 19 resulting in a

delay in some posts being filled so it was not anticipated that there would be such a large underspend on staffing in the current year.

Moving on to paragraph 3.25 which talked about the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Members' attention was drawn to the table which gave an overview of the budget growth and savings that had been applied to the 2021/22 budget. One of the key things to note was that there was a large savings target but it mostly related to efficiency savings rather than actually cutting services and it was mainly around reducing costs for children looked after placements. Members were reassured that there had been good good progress so far to deliver on the savings target.

The final section covered the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). A large deficit was carried over from 2019/20 (just over £3.8m) and this had increased significantly during 2020/21 standing at over £7m. Members noted that the DSG was ringfenced and did not impact on the Council's general funds. The position reflected the ongoing pressures around education costs for children with SEND. Those pressures were reflected within the finance position as well. The commissioning strategy would be key in terms of helping to manage the deficit in the short and long term.

In discussing the report Members received clarification in relation to query in relation to the DSG.

Concluded:

(1) that panel members receive the 2020/21 final spend against budget for children's services and the risks and opportunities associated with the medium-term position;

In agreement with the Chairman there was a change to the Agenda order with the following item considered next:

CAY Executive Member Report (Oral Report) (Agenda Item 12)

The Executive Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning provided Members with an oral report on key areas in her portfolio of interest to Members of the Panel.

The Executive Member referred to numbers of care leavers not in education, employment and training and informed Panel members of a recent event attended by Mark Rodell who spoke about what the Council could do to support its care leavers in terms of identifying opportunities in the local authority and with its partners and helping them to overcome barriers.

Discussions had been taking place on how to spend the £20k identified at the beginning of the year to support care leavers. Originally it had been decided to spend the money on mentoring schemes but at subsequent discussions from talking with young people it was suggested that the funds be used as one-off grants to aid people into employment. The Executive Member explained that she would like to demonstrate the value of the £20k and hoped to persuade

that it became a regular allocation to help young people to get into employment and feel more confident.

The Executive Member referred to the Winterstoke Hundred expansion. A former refugee care leaver had been employed by the contractor with the goal of introducing another apprenticeship. She informed the panel that the council was actively pursuing such opportunities for North Somerset young people and hoped to achieve more.

The Executive member agreed to provide feedback on how the £20k fund for care leavers was being utilised including successes at the next CYPS Panel meeting on 21 October 2021.

Concluded:

(1) that the Panel receive and consider the oral report of the Executive member;

(2) that the Panel be provided with a report on how the £20k care leaver's fund has been utilised including successes at the next CYPS Panel meeting on 21 October 2021.

CAY North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together Annual Report (Agenda item 11)

The Panel received a presentation from Kenton Mee, North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together on the Forum's Annual Survey and Report. He explained that that the North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together was the parent carer forum for North Somerset. The forum received a small amount of core funding from the DfE and represented the collective voice of parent carers with children with additional needs (0-25) in the local area. The forum fed into national parent carer forums in relation to national policy.

Members noted that in relation to the annual survey 223 responses had been received with most questions being optional as the forum only wanted to receive responses from individuals who had experience of the relevant area in the survey. Members were informed that social care was one of the areas where the forum was surprised at the low number of responses which raised a broader question over the SEND community and how many were accessing social care which led to discussions with Children's Services on how people are tapping into the services and ensuring parent carers were aware of what services were there and the appropriate routes they can access and where personal budgets for children and young people would be an appropriate approach.

Members asked and received clarification on the percentage of parent carers who responded (1400 children with education health care plans (EHCPs) probably increased to 1500 and approximately 4000 on SEN support. In terms of percentage it was quite good in terms of take up on EHCPs.); how many parents completed the whole questionnaire (223); whether the survey was a standard national survey being the same throughout the country and

comparable with other areas (no, as different terms in different areas and needs to be tailored to the particular area).

Concluded:

- (1) that the Panel receive and consider the presentation on the Annual Survey and Report;
- (2) that the Panel members contact Kenton Mee via email with regards any questions in relation to the presentation and report.

CAYPanel's Work Plan (Agenda item 13)

The Chairman presented the Work Plan.

Items to be added:

- Home to School Transport
- Briefing Children's Services Performance Data, Direction of Travel and RAG Rating – autumn 2021 (TBC)

Concluded:

- (1) that the Work Plan be received and any comments forwarded to the Democratic and Electoral Services Officer.

