

EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 18 January 2024 commencing at 11.50 am and finishing at 2.00 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Eddie Reeves – in the Chair

Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Deputy Chair)

Councillor Trish Elphinstone

Councillor Andy Graham

Councillor Jenny Hannaby

Councillor Nigel Simpson

Councillor Sally Povolotsky

Councillor Roz Smith

Councillor Michael Waine

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Kate Gregory, Cabinet member for SEND Improvement;
Councillor John Howson, Cabinet member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services

Officers: Stephen Chandler, Executive Director of People
Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services
Kate Reynolds, Interim Deputy Director for Education
Jean Kelly, Deputy Director for Children's Social Care
Ian Smart, SEND Transformation Programme Director
Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting [, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE 2023-24 COUNCIL YEAR

(Agenda No. 1)

For the benefit of members of the public and to remind members, the Scrutiny Officer read out the terms of reference for the Committee which had been published alongside the agenda. He reminded members that the Chair must be a member of the Opposition Group.

The Scrutiny Officer invited nominations for the Chair of the new Committee for the remainder of the 2023/24 Council Year. Cllr Brighthouse proposed Cllr Reeves. This nomination was seconded by Cllr Simpson. There being no other nominations it was **AGREED** that Cllr Reeves be the Chair of the Education and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2023/24 Council Year. Cllr Reeves assumed the Chair at this point.

2 ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY CHAIR FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE 2023-24 COUNCIL YEAR

(Agenda No. 2)

The Chair invited nominations for the post of Deputy Chair for the remainder of the 2023/24 Council Year. Cllr Elphinstone proposed Cllr Brighthouse and this was seconded by Cllr Waine. Cllr Smith proposed Cllr Graham and this was seconded by Cllr Hannaby.

In the vote, Cllr Brighthouse was elected by five votes to four. It was thus **AGREED** Cllr Brighthouse be the Deputy Chair of the Education and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2023/24 Council Year.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 3)

Apologies were received from Ruth Bennie.

4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Agenda No. 4)

There were none.

5 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

(Agenda No. 5)

The Committee was addressed by A. Bush about her experience of Woodeaton School.

C. Brenner on behalf of SEND Parent Action addressed four areas of the Priority Action Plan that SEND Parent Action considered should be improved (namely, restoring trust between officers and families, measuring impact, effective scrutiny, and governance and accountability).

K. Nellist spoke to her experiences as a young person who regretted that the PAP did not highlight the importance of the views of young people themselves.

T. Verrier highlighted the mental health needs of young people. At the end of her address, she quoted a parent stating "*received a generic email from CAMHS, informing all parents of children awaiting an appointment for ADHD medication that: 'the CAMHS service is currently suspended, and no newpatients will be commencing ADHD medication for now'.*"

The Committee asked the Executive Director of People to provide an urgent update to members of the Committee on that. An email from Oxford Health was circulated to members that afternoon explaining that access to services was not closed but that, owing to a national shortage of the medications prescribed to treat ADHD, CAMHS was not currently starting young people on ADHD medication currently. It was hoped that the shortage would be alleviated swiftly but that it was unlikely to be resolved until April 2024, with that date subject to change.

6 UPDATE ON THE PRIORITY ACTION PLAN

(Agenda No. 6)

Cllr Kate Gregory, Cabinet member for SEND Improvement, and Cllr John Howson, Cabinet member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services, attended to present the report providing members with an update on the Priority Action Plan (PAP) which was written after the Local Area SEND Inspection.

The Cabinet members were accompanied by the following officers: Stephen Chandler, Executive Director of People; Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services; Kate Reynolds, Interim Deputy Director for Education; Jean Kelly, Deputy Director for Children's Social Care; Ian Smart, the SEND Transformation Programme Director.

Cllr Gregory began by thanking the public speakers for their contributions and expressed how it was important it was to hear from people directly about their experiences.

The Programme Director addressed various actions within the PAP and explained that, whilst it was a key document, the transformation programme relating to it was to implement and embed a fundamentally transformative approach, around schools, EHCPs, specialist provision, and with pathways into employment. There were some areas where action could be taken immediately but it was important to ensure that any changes implemented were sustainable and that they would deliver better outcomes. It was this that would lead to increased confidence on the part of parents and carers as well as on the part of children and young people. Levels of trust and confidence would be surveyed and monitored on a regular basis.

The Committee was keen that the seeming absence of the voice of young people themselves from the PAP should be remedied and there was a recognition that the language could be improved. It was explained to the Committee that there were plans to improve some aspects of its language.

The Programme Director emphasised that the work arising from the PAP was not simply a response to the Local Area SEND Inspection, although it arose from that. Instead, it was seeking to ensure that issues that had arisen and developed over a number of years were remedied. Whilst recognising that some issues were negative, the Committee was reminded that there was also a great deal of excellent work happening and that good work would be publicised too. A commitment to openness and transparency demanded sharing of both bad news and good.

The governance framework was in place and meetings had been set up and were happening. The SEND Assurance Board had met.

The Committee noted the target in PAP 1:2 that there would be “agreed definition of co-production (including monitoring and evaluation) [which was] created by, shared, and understood across all partners, parents, and carers.” In response to a question, the Committee was advised that the Parent Carer Forum was not the only voice represented.

There was discussion around the differences between co-production, consultation, and engagement and the appropriateness of each in different circumstances. The Committee was assured that the PAP was a living document and that changes would be seen in it. However, there were fundamental issues to remedy first. Embedding co-production as a cyclical process was one of those issues.

Members of the Committee requested a copy of the co-production charter and documentation underpinning it.

The supply and demand of key services, such as CAMHS, were highlighted as core issue for the PAP. While it was agreed that every child was entitled to an assessment within a reasonable period, meaningful outcomes following an assessment may be limited by supply issues. A programme of early identification, intervention and prevention featured in the PAP as crucial tools to combat these issues. The knock-on effects these early actions would have on demand would reduce the requirement for higher levels of supply for other key services. It was explained that additional training may be required to build on the skills and capabilities within the education system to identify children at risk earlier which would allow for an earlier response.

Concerns were voiced about the delayed impact of the PAP on those individuals already within the system. The potential of providing special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) with more powers was discussed. SENCOs would be allowed to act more immediately without having to go through a whole long process. It was generally accepted SENCOs, and other experts closer to the individual, had a good understanding of what was required for the individual and had the expertise to help. More training on neurodivergence would help many within the system, by increasing the skills and confidence of those working within the system. If required, individual cases could be dealt with outside of the PAP, especially if the issues were caused by communication between users and services.

The point was raised about the lack of scrutiny with the PAP. Members suggested that members of the Committee should sit on groups within the Governance and Accountability structures. This would enable members to act as envoys and avoid wasted procedural time reporting back to the committee. The benefits of a clear line of sight from the committee to the work being done with the PAP was also accepted. However, further consideration of how this would be done was required outside of Committee. The Corporate Director would consider this, and report back to the Committee.

The Corporate Director agreed to take away points made about more specific individual work streaming plans, such as hybrid/flexi schooling and trauma-informed

approaches and consider how these could be integrated with the PAP. The Inclusion Toolkit written in response to Manchester City Council's Inclusion Strategy was commended and it was suggested that the Council would benefit from considering its insights.

Concerns were raised about the number of indicators and deadlines within the PAP, and how these multiple metrics would be monitored. While there were several Key Performance Indicators built into the PAP, many designed for the Committee to hold to account, some of these were vague and clarity was required. It was agreed that such clarity would be provided.

Assurances were made to the Committee about the improvements that were already in progress with communication, which were statistically evidenced. The balance required between speed and empathy in these communications was emphasised as an important mechanism for preventing complaints escalating. This would ensure a better system for the user and parent or carer.

The Committee expressed its keenness to co-opt members in line with the terms of reference. It was hoped that they would provide valuable insight. An advertisement and application process would be devised but there would be a need to consider if DBS checks would be necessary were young people to sit on the Committee.

The Committee requested the following actions:

- That the co-production charter and documentation underpinning it should be provided to members of the Committee;
- That the Corporate Director would provide clarity over how the KPIs would be monitored;
- That the Corporate Director would consider how members of the Committee could be included amongst the Task and Finish groups overseeing the PAP.

The Committee resolved to make the following **OBSERVATIONS**:

- That the Council should improve its communications to members generally but specifically in relation to the Priority Action Plan;
- That the Council should continue to work to improve empathy and clarity in its response to complaints.

The Committee resolved to make the following **RECOMMENDATIONS**:

- That the Council should ensure that the voice of children and young people should be sought and heard more clearly within the Priority Action Plan and within the work arising from it;
- That the Council should arrange for members of the Committee to be invited to sit on the Task and Finish groups.

7

WORK PROGRAMME

(Agenda No. 7)

In relation to the Committee's work programme, it was **AGREED** that Chair and Deputy Chair would meet with the Scrutiny Officer and the Corporate Director to

identify areas for the Committee to consider going forward. This would feed into a proposed work programme for the Committee to agree.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 20