



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 14 JUNE 2022 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Batool (Chair)
Councillor Willmott (Vice Chair)

Councillor Khan
Councillor Dr Moore

Councillor Thalukdar

Councillor Pandya
Councillor Riyait

Standing Invitees (Non-Voting)

Joseph Wyglendacz

Teaching Unions

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Janet McKenna.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission held on 8 March 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS

The Chair noted that the Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Commissions were set out in the Council's Constitution.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION FOR 2022/23

The Membership of the Commission for 2022/23 was noted.

The Chair noted that Gerry Hirst of the Roman Catholic Diocesan, had recently passed away. The Chair paid tribute to Gerry's years of service on the Commission.

6. DATES OF MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION FOR 2022/23

The dates of meetings of the Commission for 2022/23 were noted.

7. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

8. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

9. REVIEW OF THE SCOPE OF THE COMMISSION

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education presented a verbal update on the overarching issues currently for the Services covered by the Commission. It was noted that:

- Due to a number of factors, Children's Services were entering their biggest period of change in several years.
- The recent Independent Review of Children's Social Care by Josh MacAlister and the reviews of the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson would both lead to significant change in Children's Social Care Services.
- There was now a new focus from the Government on prevention with regards to CYP entering care, Leicester was one of the priority areas for Family Hubs.
- The cost of placements for Residential Home Services was increasing significantly. With the quality of more affordable placements being weaker.
- There was a national staffing crisis in Social Work, with the prices for agency staff becoming excessive.
- In Education, levels of attainment were lower than they should have been. It was felt that this was primarily driven by what happened during early years.
- In SEND Services there was currently an accelerated progress plan with

regards to the NHS.

- In July the Leicestershire CCG would be replaced by an Integrated Care Board. There was a risk that the new organisation would focus disproportionately on adults and not give sufficient attention to health of younger people.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- There was an in-house service for residential care which received strong ratings. There were plans to expand this in-house service but it would be difficult to provide a service which would be sufficient for all CYP who needed it in-house, given the range of needs.
- The costs of providing the in-house service were similar to comparable private sector residencies. However the in-house service made more of an effort to create space for any CYP who needed it, and placement breakdown was far less common in-house.
- Despite there not being a great amount of positivity towards social workers in the media, they provided an important service and made a positive difference in many lives. High profile cases of mistakes in this area were often complex.
- Vacant beds in Leicester residential homes could be filled by other Local Authorities for a price. It was expected that the capacity from new homes opening would be filled entirely with CYP from Leicester.
- Since the start of 2022, many permanent Council social workers had gone over to agency work or resigned. It was not currently possible to fill internal social worker posts, and prices for agency staff were currently inappropriate. Therefore, work was being undertaken to use the current social workers in the most efficient way possible, including reallocating staff on a temporary basis.
- Exit interviews with departing social workers showed that they had a positive experience at the Council, but they were leaving for the better pay of agency work. This was due to other Councils outside the region who had recently received inadequate inspection results offering extremely high rates. Work was ongoing to provide a better offer for internal social workers outside of the pay package.
- The apprenticeship approach in social work was well established, there were strict rules about what roles needed to be undertaken by a qualified social worker but expanding the role of apprentices was being looked into.

Commission Members were encouraged to visit the in-house residential homes to see the level of service provided.

AGREED:

That the Commission notes the update.

10. PROVISION OF TAXI FRAMEWORK FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

The Chair announced that due to Executive Members needing to leave the meeting early, the items would be taken out of order, with the taxi provision

item being taken before the Education White Paper item.

The Director of Adult Social Care and Commissioning presented a verbal update on the procurement process for taxi provisions for vulnerable children. It was noted that:

- The Council currently supported the transport of an average of 1500 CYP with disabilities from home to school. The current taxi provision cost £8m in the last financial year.
- A procurement process was ongoing in 2019/20 but at the last minute the taxi companies involved refused the pricing changes before the new contract started.
- A new procurement process resulted in a dynamic purchasing system which would come into force in the summer.
- A 10% uplift was given to the taxi companies to help with recent sharp increase in the cost of fuel.
- The option of an in-house taxi fleet had been explored, but it was determined that this would cause legal issues and issues with downtime. Therefore, it was found to not be a financially sustainable option.
- The new travel policy would encourage families to have more responsibility in getting their own children to school. A focus of this was offering more personal transport budgets. Schools had also expressed an interest in providing transport directly.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- It was anticipated that wider changes in the Service to encourage inclusivity would bring down taxi costs as there wouldn't be as many CYP being transported across the city.
- There had previously been a model of outsourcing to one taxi organisation. This created issues with the cost of downtime and maintenance and was abandoned. There were also issues with downtime for the in-house bus fleet. This contributed to the decision not to pursue an in-house taxi fleet.
- No other Council's had an in-house taxi fleet.
- Any taxi company providing transport to school would have their insurance documents checked initially, alongside an annual check and spot checks at schools.
- Other Council's were also seeing a rise in taxi costs.

Members asked for a report at a future Commission meeting, outlining the costs and savings, and tracking the progress and impact of the changes. It was also requested that this report contain comparisons with other nearby cities.

AGREED:

That a written progress report be brought to the December meeting of the Commission.

11. EDUCATION WHITE PAPER AND SEND REVIEW

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report on the recent Education White Paper and the SEND Green Paper.

The Principal Education Officer provided details of the Education White Paper and its implications for the Council, it was noted that:

- The policy paper set out the Government's vision for education from early years to university.
- There were four major themes around which the proposed changes were based. These were:
 - An excellent teacher for every child. Proposals in this theme were:
 - Investment in Early Years workforce.
 - Improved access and reform to teacher training.
 - Commitment to raise starting salaries for teachers.
 - High standards of curriculum, attendance and behaviour. Proposals in this theme were:
 - A focus on literacy and numeracy.
 - A new arms-length curriculum body.
 - A national behaviour survey.
 - A new expectation of 32.5 hours a week spent in school.
 - Long term support for those excluded.
 - Greater expectations on Councils to engage with absent pupils.
 - Targeted support for children behind on maths or English. Proposals in this theme were:
 - Extra tutoring courses as a response to the pandemic.
 - Joined up support between SEND and Children's Social Care.
 - Work with Virtual Headteacher to support Children Looked After.
 - A stronger and fairer school system that works for every child. Proposals in this theme were:
 - By 2030 all schools to be in a MAT or be in the process of joining one.
 - Councils to be able to establish MATs.
 - Clarity over roles and responsibilities within MATs.
 - The Council would remain responsible for admissions, safeguarding, and attendance.

The Director of Adult Social Care and Commissioning provided details of the SEND Green Paper and its implications for the Council, it was noted that:

- This was a consultation document containing 22 key questions about the proposed changes, the Council was currently collating responses to the questions. Commission Members would receive a copy of the responses before the deadline in July.
- The key themes were improving outcomes for SEND pupils, creating a

more positive experience navigating the SEND system, and delivering value for money for families.

- It was proposed that a single national SEND and alternative provision system be developed.
- An extra £1bn would be invested for SEND provision.
- A major focus of the paper was improving provision for SEND pupils in mainstream schools.
- There would be an increased role for alternative provision.
- A new National SEND Delivery Board would hold partners to account in implementing proposals.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- There was a limited focus on Early Years in the White Paper. However, it was felt that the focus should be on the first critical 1001 days, which was addressed by the Government's Best Start for Life work.
- There was a surplus of funded nursery places but poor take-up of those places.
- Local schools were skilled at developing English skills for those who come to Leicester speaking another language.
- The outcomes of Ofsted inspections for Local Authority maintained schools in the city had been improving and were recently strong.
- Terms of Reference for the role of Council's in forming MATs had recently been published.
- There were concerns about the diminished role of Council's in education under the new plans. However, it was felt that constructive engagement with the Government would help this.
- New attendance guidance was issued in May 2022 with greater clarity on the penalty notice system.
- Most schools already had 32.5 school hours a week.
- There had been no indication of what the Ofsted 2025 Framework would contain.
- Certain changes in the SEND Green Paper were already being implemented on a local level.
- Mainstream Leicester schools were not in line to receive any extra funding proposed in the White Paper.

Members requested a report on Early Years Services to be brought to a future Commission meeting, in particular in relation to childcare sufficiency.

Members expressed concerns about the Education White Paper, with reference to the diminished role of Local Authorities.

AGREED:

That the Commission requests that a detailed report be brought to a future Commission meeting on Early Years Services.

12. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Commission were invited to consider content of the work programme and were invited to make suggestions for additions as appropriate to be brought to future meetings.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.36pm.