



Leicester
City Council

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

Held: THURSDAY, 11 MARCH 2021 at 5:00 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Dawood (Chair)
Councillor Cole (Vice Chair)

Councillor Pantling
Councillor Rahman

Councillor Riyait
Councillor Whittle

In Attendance:

Councillor March
Councillor Dr Moore
Councillor Cutkelvin, Assistant City Mayor - Education and Housing
Councillor Russell, Deputy City Mayor - Social Care and Anti-Poverty

Co-opted Members (Voting)

Mr Mohit Sharma – Parent Governor (Primary / Special Needs)

Standing Invitees (Non-Voting)

Janet McKenna - Unison

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124. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, reminding everyone that this was a virtual meeting, as permitted under Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020, to enable meetings to take place whilst observing social distancing measures.

At the invitation of the Chair, it was noted that Councillor March, Councillor Dr Moore and Sue Strange, a parent of a child who was attending Millgate School were all invited to participate in discussion of item 5 "Re-alignment of Special

School Funding”.

The Chair requested that all Members, officers, Members of the Executive and invitees present at the meeting kindly introduce themselves.

125. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Gerard Hurst (Roman Catholic Diocesan), Carolyn Lewis (Church of England Diocese) and Joseph Wyglendacz (Teaching Unions).

126. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cole declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting that he had family members who worked within schools and a family member that worked within the Council. In addition, Councillor Cole declared that he represented the ward in which West Gate School was located.

Councillor Whittle declared that he represented the ward in which Millgate School was located.

In accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct, these interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillor’s judgement of the public interests. Councillor Cole and Councillor Whittle were not therefore required to withdraw from the meeting during consideration and discussion of the agenda items.

Although not a member of the Commission, Councillor Dr Moore declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item 5, “Re-alignment of Special School Funding”, for transparency, that she was a governor at Keyham Lodge and Millgate School. This interest was not considered to be significant enough to preclude Councillor Dr Moore from addressing the Commission at the invitation of the Chair.

127. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

128. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received.

129. RE-ALIGNMENT OF SPECIAL SCHOOL FUNDING

The Strategic Director for Social Care & Education submitted this report to provide the Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission with the opportunity to provide feedback and comment on the outcome of a consultation exercise to implement a new funding formula for the six maintained special

schools in the city. It was proposed the changes would take effect from 1 April 2021.

The Assistant City Mayor for Education introduced the item and officers presented the report. The following was noted:

- The review of the special schools' funding related directly to the imbalance of the existing funding arrangements between the six schools. It was noted that four of the schools would see an increase of funding, whilst two schools namely Keyham Lodge and Millgate School would see their funding reduced.

All Members and invitees present, engaged in discussion of the report and noted some of the below concerns including:

- The legal and equality impact of the review, that a longer programme for consideration was required especially for the Commission's comments to be taken on board. There was a lot of concern from Members and invitees that the budget cap would have a detrimental effect on Keyham Lodge and Millgate Schools, who were currently achieving outstanding results. In addition, clarity was requested on the following points: the DfE agreement process and general timelines for implementing, standardised costs and the banding system. On the point of the consultation; it was queried as to why feedback from parents and children was not included within the report and it was reiterated that lots of work was required to help all children not just those achieving high grades.

Officers present and the Assistant City Mayor for Education responded to the comments, as set out below:

- There were four specific SEND schools in the City which were significantly underfunded, and the proposed budget was seeking to address this. Some schools had surplus in their budgets and others were struggling.
- There would be difficulties if the process was put on hold as it would mean that the schools who were set to gain from the budget increase wouldn't receive the level of support they required for another year.
- It was clarified that this funding was a ringfenced grant (the high needs block) from the Department of Education (DfE) which could only be spent on Special Needs Education. The review aimed to ensure redistribution of the funding in a fair and transparent manner.
- The banding system was developed with reference to systems in other Local Authorities. The schools identified the band for each pupil and LCC worked closely with the schools to ensure the banding model worked. The bulk of funding would follow each pupil based on their need and regardless of which school they attended. It was noted that this banding system would be kept under review. In addition, a review into the high needs block would also take place. To ensure 'band creep' was avoided, communication would be made with the special schools this

week to request them to design a moderation system for decisions to be made by their peers.

- In relation to a timeline for the process by which the reductions would be made in the case of two schools, it was explained that LCC were planning to submit an application in the next few weeks, the DfE would then generally take a couple of months (anticipated by end of May/ June) to respond. Following the DfE response phasing would be implemented around Autumn time. The intention was to have a rapid conversation with the two schools to inform them what a transition period would look like.
- Only half the EHCP children were noted to be in special schools, as the other half were in mainstream schooling. This balance was noted to be broadly consistent with national practice. However, there was a consistent message from mainstream secondary schools that they were not equipped for SEND children's needs and also for those with behavioural problems. It was therefore noted that the service would be looking at how these mainstream schools could be enabled to cater more effectively for SEND children – this upcoming piece of work was noted as forming a key element of the 'inclusion agenda'.
- It was reported that the consultation exercise took place with stakeholders and included regular meetings with the special school's grouping. A letter was drafted from each of the schools to parents regarding the consultation and details were provided in school bulletins/ newsletters, however some schools may have communicated this information better than others. Furthermore, the Parent Carer Forum, the SEND information Advice and Support Service and Big Mouth Forum were worked with and over 150 parent and carer responses were received.
- Another aspect highlighted during the discussion was that educational support may need to be looked at separate to how these children could be better supported with their social care needs.

The Chair thanked everyone present for their contribution to the meeting.

AGREED:

1. The Commission is concerned about the potential impact on student's education and welfare and therefore requests an update of any significant issues that may arise as a result of the new arrangements.
2. The Commission is concerned about the impact of any staff reviews as a result of the new arrangements and would like to be informed about any decrease of staff, which in turn could potentially affect the support provided to the students.
3. A report to be bought back informing the Commission on the outcome of the transition discussions with the schools.
4. Concerns in the report have been raised in relation to legal and equality impact of the review and the potential reputational damage to the authority.
5. The Commission to be updated about the outcome of the letter to Department for Education.

6. The Commission to be notified when the new funding arrangements will be implemented.

130. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.34pm.

