



Leicester  
City Council

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

Held: TUESDAY, 22 JUNE 2021 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Gee (Chair)  
Councillor Cole (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Batool  
Councillor Pickering

Councillor Pandya  
Councillor Riyait

Councillor Willmott

In Attendance:

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

Also Present:

Mr Mohit Sharma - Parent Governor (Primary / Special Schools)

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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

**2. 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.

Councillor Pickering declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general

business of the meeting that she was a school governor.

Councillor Riyait declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting that he was a school governor.

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, Pickering and Riyait were not therefore required to withdraw from the meeting during consideration and discussion of the agenda items.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

AGREED:

that the minutes of the Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 25 February 2021 and 11 March 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

### **4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and requested Members, Officers and invitees present at the meeting to introduce themselves.

The meeting undertook a minute's silence in recognition of the recent passing of Councillor John Thomas (Member of the Humberstone and Hamilton Ward).

At the invitation of the Chair, it was noted that the Principal of Phoenix Agenda Supplementary School - Camille London-Miyo MBE. NPQH was invited to participate in discussion of item 9 'The Underachievement of 'Black Caribbean' and 'White British Working-class' pupils of secondary school age in Leicester'.

### **5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION**

AGREED:

That the membership of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission for 2021/22 be noted.

### **6. DATES OF COMMISSION MEETINGS 2021/22**

AGREED:

That the dates of meetings of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission for 2021/22 be noted.

### **7. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

### **8. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations, or

statements of case had been received.

## 9. REVIEW OF SCOPE OF THE COMMISSION

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submitted a presentation and commission structure chart in relation to a review of scope of the Commission, including the work done within the department to deal with the impact of Coronavirus on Leicester's Children's Services and schools.

The various service Directors presented the following:

- The **Education service** area focussed on schools including ensuring the readiness for school, that children attended school and that sufficient places were available for children to attend school.
- In addition this area looked at the education welfare of children, early years settings and Connexions - which IS a careers service for young people who live in Leicester City aged 16-19 or up to 25 years for young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- In terms of improvements the team also worked in and with schools to improve outcomes, performance and to support governors, as well as ensuring the right data was in place to determine how well schools were performing.
- **Social care services** and families in need of ongoing support, was noted to cover: children's services, looked after children service area, supporting ages 16+ into the adult world, fostering and adoption services, safeguarding teams/ safeguarding for all schools, quality assurance and management programmes, investigation, responsibility for health assessments and many more aspects.
- **Special Education Needs (SEN)** service area delivers services to children and young people with disabilities, including physical disabilities, learning disabilities and those with neurodevelopmental conditions. There are currently over 3,000 children and young people with a statutory Education, Health & Care Plan and a further 10,000 who have lower levels needs who are also supported by the SEN service. This support includes specialist teachers and support staff based in schools. The key priority for the service is to ensure that children and young people with a disability are taught in mainstream schools wherever possible and are prepared for adulthood as they grow and develop. The service also works closely with children and young people, their parents and carers, schools and the parent/ carer forum.
- Further to the structure of the commission's services, the budgets for each service and key challenges faced was also presented.
- It was requested that the Commission be aware of the external scrutiny the department receives from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which includes a SEN re-visit in May 2021. It is also anticipated that Children's Social Care is likely to be subject to an inspection in

Sept/Oct 2021.

Following queries from Members of the Commission, the below responses were provided:

- Further to a Members request, the Officer agreed to bring to a future CYP&E Scrutiny Commission meeting a view about the population and the ethnic breakdown of children in schools across the whole of the city. In addition, it was agreed that details could be provided about all the different groups in the various sections that the service had data for. It was noted that last week external national data sets published of data were published in relation to the January school census around children in schools, however Officers would provide some analysis internally. Following the request, it was clarified that the service could not provide an ethnic breakdown of the staff as some of the staff were not employed by the Council.

AGREED:

1. It was agreed that the presentation slides and the scope of commission structure chart presented at the meeting for this item, would be circulated to Members of the CYP&E Scrutiny Commission.

#### **10. THE UNDERACHIEVEMENT OF 'BLACK CARIBBEAN' AND 'WHITE BRITISH WORKING-CLASS' PUPILS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL AGE IN LEICESTER**

The Principal Education Officer submitted the Underachievement of 'Black Caribbean' and 'White British Working-Class' pupils of secondary school age in Leicester' report to provide some context and background to the current work across Education to improve outcomes for all disadvantaged children and particularly those groups identified by Scrutiny Commission.

The following was noted:

- A working task group was set up to address the disparity of the groups highlighted to be underachieving.
- There were previously more funding and direct support opportunities because the LA used to have an ethnic minority achievement service and was able to monitor racist incidents, work and support schools with children new to English. However, there was now a reduced funding amount from £34m some years ago to now £1.9m that the service received which must go directly to schools for their school improvement activity. Therefore, the LA approach was now to focus on working in partnership with schools and delivering the statutory elements.
- Some of the key aims with schools in Leicester City are:
  - Working together and improve communication,
  - Ensure teachers from minority groups were represented at all levels,
  - Enable schools to develop their curriculum and their offer to

- children,
  - To ensure schools are providing aspects such as racial literacy training and having an understanding of the whole range of curriculum needs,
  - To enable schools to develop their curriculum which was right for their pupils/ students and provide support for dealing with bullying and racist incidents in a proactive way and preventing those coming forward.
  - The Local authority needed to work with schools via discussion, challenge, debate and demonstration,
  - Experts exist within Leicester city communities and schools and it was therefore necessary to enable those groups to work together to address the key findings of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission to improve those outcomes for all children and those specific groups underachieving - children of black Caribbean heritage (and other black heritage) and children of white heritage living in deprived area. It was noted that of these groups over 50% of children are eligible for pupil premium.
- It was anticipated that with the task group the work will be able to move forward. The initial focus would be to look at attitudes and behaviours, environment and curriculum that schools are offering, with focuses on secondary education but also being aware of the challenges being faced in primary schools.
- A three-year strategy would be developed, working with schools and partners, early years setting, universities, and parents etc to identify what needs to be done to improve all outcomes particularly for those underachieving.
- The Covid-19 pandemic was noted to have broadened the disparity and also had an impact on many children's mental health. Schools had faced several challenges.

Following queries from Members of the Commission, the following responses were provided:

- To clarify certain aspects, it was agreed that the task group report would be circulated to Members of the Commission.
- Officers clarified the reasons/ evidence as to why these specific groups had been identified as underachieving. However, it was further expressed that the work being carried out was for the benefit of all children who were suffering disadvantages in Leicester City schools.
- The Principal Education Officer noted that data about groups of children underachieving was available, and the Commission would be regularly updated with this information.
- It was noted that parental engagement was an important aspect and the service would continue to encourage schools to reach out to parents. Work was already underway in this area from early years, of which Member of the Commission encouraged that going back to the early years age group was very important.
- Work to develop an education strategy for the City had commenced in

January 2020 but had to be paused for several reasons, however, it was reported that this work would be resuming in Autumn 2021. It was emphasised that this work would need to be looked at from a range of perspectives including partners, businesses, children's centres etc to ensure the needs of the City were being met and also to identify what was essential for education in Leicester City.

- One Member reported bullying of specific communities at one of the secondary schools in Leicester (now an academy), it was therefore requested that Ward Members report any specific issues directly to the service officers. In this regard the importance of Members being school governors was also noted.
- In terms of educational attainment, a Member of the Commission requested that the data be looked at to understand what had made the most impact/ difference over the past years. In response, the Officer noted that in 1997 Leicester City was at the bottom of the table, however in the past 25 years Leicester had shown improved outcomes for all children, but further improvements were still to be made.
- The performance outcomes would now look at the longer trends/ picture as well as the past three years to ensure the delivery of a curriculum which was right for Leicester.
- It was reiterated that the plan was to ensure systematic change of things being done periodically and to keep it at the top of the agenda until it was common in education. It would then be crucial to police the work done to ensure the achievements were being made and the environment was favourable for all children.

The Principal of Phoenix Agenda Supplementary School/ a member of the task group was present at the meeting and noted the following:

- Many issues previously highlighted by Bernard Coard in 1970's still exist in terms of African heritage young people in education.
- There was now an impact of exclusions and Black Caribbean boys were five times more likely to be excluded from schools than any other group.
- Institutional racism existed in our society, some of the structures that obstruct the achievement in schools still existed and it was therefore crucial to talk about how to make an impact and inevitably change those structures.
- Schools had a commitment of care to give the available data to the DfE, however this request needed to be influential enough for them to release the figures.
- Communities had concerns about the commitment of Leicester City education to address the disparities that exist in terms of educational achievement of African heritage communities and the white working class and other groups. Hence the reason for the necessity of the race equalities mark within schools, that can provide schools with a framework and structure that they can work towards.
- The Principal of Phoenix Agenda Supplementary School noted the significance of having a curriculum that represented the community it served.
- The task group was a way forward and it was time to address these

issues with consistency that would allow transformation in our schools.

The Chair thanked the Principal Education Officer for all the hard work put into the report.

AGREED:

1. The structures – to widen the diversity of school governors, as individuals and members of various faiths. With the support of the Local authority to support communities to step forward and be governors and diversify that group.
2. That an update be provided from the task group to the Commission for the October meeting.
3. That the task group report be circulated to Members of the Commission.

## **11. PROVISION OF TAXI FRAMEWORK FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submitted a report to provide the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission with an update on the provision of taxi journeys for Vulnerable people and the implementation/procurement of a new Framework.

The Head of Commission, Adult Social Care noted the following:

- The purpose of the intended new framework was to both improve quality by implementing a more robust quality assurance process and to seek to bring a level of management/consistency of journey costs.
- There are two work streams in place, one to reduce the reliance on taxi's and the other to re-procure a new framework.
- A previous procurement exercise took place which involved engagement with the existing and new taxi companies prior to the contracts being awarded. However, post award the majority refused to accept the journeys due to price.
- The service had learnt from the 'failure' of the previous procurement exercise and was now seeking to introduce a Dynamic Purchasing System and engagement with all relevant partners, especially the taxi providers themselves was in process to deliver a revised framework that would provide a cost effective taxi service that is safe for all users.
- The procurement exercise would manage to bring consistency to journey rates and ensure a robust quality assurance process. It would also set out to operators that if a fixed rate was used again, there would be no room for negotiation once the tender was advertised.
- Options to enhance the rate for carrying people with more complex needs as part of the journey would be explored.
- Increased work with members throughout the consultation and procurement exercises would take place.

Following Members comments the below responses were provided:

- The presenting Officer agreed to share further detail of the new

framework with the Member of Commission that requested it.

- In terms of the timescale, the service was working towards releasing the opportunity to the market at the end of summer 2021 and was currently engaging with operators. This would give lead in time for contracts to be in place for April 2022, current arrangements had been extended until this date to provide continuity.
- The service was also looking into various options in relation to reducing the use of taxi's including some of the below:
  - Allocating personal transport budget for families i.e. parents/ carers, so they could transport the children themselves in own vehicles/ leasing cars etc.
  - Travelling Independently – travel training offer was being looked at.
  - Central pick-up points and greater use of in-house transport (using taxi's as a latter resort rather than a primary).
- The presenting Officer expressed the importance of quality service standards, in this regard, the service had built into the process a number of opportunities to ensure this. At first point of submission a minimum of quality requirements and evidence from operators would be requested and checked, this would also be followed up. Once the contract was live a dedicated team would be overseeing and operating a contract management framework approach which would require regular checks to ensure quality standards were maintained. In addition, there would be an opportunity for people to raise any concerns, which could be investigated further if necessary.

AGREED:

1. To note the position of the report.
2. That further updates be provided to the Commission in a future meeting once the travel policy has been developed.

## **12. REVIEW OF HIGH NEEDS BLOCK - SEN SUPPORT FOR PUPILS IN MAINSTREAM**

The Head of Service – SEND Support Service provided a verbal update and presentation on the Review of High Needs Block – SEN Support for pupils in mainstream.

The Head of Service, SEND Support Service provided the following information, in addition to the report:

- The High Needs Block was ringfenced and was the total sum available for SEND Support in Leicester City. As a result of increased costs since Element 3 top-up was introduced, the Council were looking at how funds can be used more efficiently.
- The aim was to ensure every child and young people with SEND had the right opportunities and access to support their needs and improve outcomes.
- An engagement process was currently taking place with schools and other partners to gather views and feedback.



- A formal consultation would then take place and Officers would come back to the Commission with regular updates.
- Top-Up Funding was explained in detail – which was noted as the mechanism which schools receive top up funds.
- Leicester City provided top up funding for pupils with an EHCP (statutory) but also had an additional mechanism for funding pupils at SEND Support (discretionary). Funding was allocated to schools in two parts: Banding Top-Up and Notional Top-Up. One of the concerns, was that some schools with similar numbers of children were receiving a larger sum of notional top-up funding than other schools. The service would be consulting on possible ways to ensure a fair and accountable distribution of funding to schools.
- Next Steps would be:
  - Informal Engagement – April 2021 – July 2021
  - Formal Consultation – Autumn 2021
  - Changes to be implemented – April 2022
- It was further noted that children achieved better in mainstream school settings rather than in behavioural type schools and therefore a larger piece of work around 'inclusivity' would be launched.

The presenting Officers further clarified details and responded to comments from Members of the Commission:

- Following a members query, it was noted that the Council had to use reserves in the past for deficits, if there were no more reserves and the spend was over, a recovery plan would most likely take place with the Department for Education (DfE).
- Different options for the spend reduction / more equal fund distribution were explored including taking away notional top-ups, capping the notional top-up budget or even freezing the amount per child. However, the presenting officer confirmed that feedback from the consultation process was important before suggesting any of the above.

AGREED:

1. To note the position of the report at this stage
2. That further information on the engagement process be brought to a future Commission meeting.

### **13. NATIONAL REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

The Chair announced that this item would be deferred to a future meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission.

### **14. UPDATE ON IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS**

The Chair announced that this item would be deferred to a future meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission.

**15. JOINT SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITIES COMMISSIONING STRATEGY**

The Chair announced that this item would be deferred to a future meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission.

**16. WORK PROGRAMME**

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

**17. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

The Director for Adult Social Care and Commissioning provided a verbal update on the SEND local area re-visit. It was noted that a re-visit took place 5 and 7 May 2021, Ofsted noted that the Council was now compliant in 4 of the 5 key domains and the robust plans were in place for the area 5, but they now needed to be accelerated. This was anticipated for the next six months.

It was noted that information slides regarding the Care review were available at Members requests.

The SEN team were thanked for their immense work and contribution.

The Deputy City Mayor - Social Care and Anti-Poverty noted that presentation slides were available for the care review or a session could be organised to go through the findings, at Members requests.

**18. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.09pm.