



Leicester  
City Council

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

Held: TUESDAY, 14 JANUARY 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Batool – Chair  
Councillor Bonham – Vice Chair

Councillor Clarke  
Councillor Dr Moore

Councillor March

Joycelin Eze-Okubuiro – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

In Attendance

Deputy City Mayor Councillor Russell  
Assistant City Mayor Councillor Pantling  
Jennifer Day – Teaching Unions Representative  
Janet McKenna – UNISON Branch Secretary  
Mario Duda – Youth Representative

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**109. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

It was noted that Councillor Karavadra was no longer a member of the Commission, Councillor Barnes would be joining the Commission in her place.

Apologies were received from Councillor Barnes.

It was noted that Councillor Dr Moore would need to leave the meeting early.

**110. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Councillor Dr Moore declared an interest due to being on the board for Millgate

School.

Councillor March declared an interest in the budget items regarding Council Tax support cuts.

#### **111. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Councillor Dr Moore had a matter arising with the High Needs and Recovery Plan item, requesting that the following be recorded:

Councillor Dr Moore had met with the Assistant City Mayor for Education and the Director of SEND and Education. A subsequent meeting had taken place with the newly appointed trustee to Millgate School. It was agreed that discussions would take place regarding securing funding from sources such as The Primary Trust, or Children in Need, with the aim to extending residency for another year.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission held on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### **112. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

It was noted that the Chair had no announcements to make.

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

Questions were presented to the commission by Mr Nizamuddin Patel regarding processes and procedures within Children's Social Care. The following responses were given by The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help:

Mr Patel asked:

Who overlooks children's social services to ensure they are following process/procedures? What internal processes are there to ensure quality is maintained and there are no service failures?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

Children's social work service delivery is inspected periodically by Ofsted. Internally case supervision between an allocated keyworker and their manager takes place monthly and will review progress on key processes and procedures. Within child protection and looked after children procedures, there are also independent chairs who review case progress at key intervals and there is an established escalation process

in place they can use if they have concerns about practice. Social Work England is the professional regulator for registered social workers, and they have the power to investigate concerns about social work practice that is not in keeping with professional standards as detailed in their codes of practice.

Mr Patel asked a supplementary question:

If a parent or professional has a complaint and has used the complaints process, is there anything else that they can do to have the complaint fully investigated?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

The complaints process is a statutory process with 3 stages, if the parents or the young person are not happy with the response after the 3 stages, they can progress the matter to the local government ombudsman.

Mr Patel asked:

The reports do not include the level of complaints raised by parents/professionals for children socials services. This will be useful to help compare to previous quarters to ensure levels of services are maintained and if any intervention or further scrutiny is required.

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

A dedicated report outlining levels of complaints and key themes comes to CYPE scrutiny twice a year.

Mr Patel asked a supplementary question:

Do you have the title of the reports please?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

The Council's website contains these reports in the committee meetings section.

Mr Patel asked:

How does the children's social services manage to ensure quality and accountability when it comes to agency social workers? If a family who are receiving help from the CIN/ CPP team are having constant change in social workers, which leads to no continuity and thus a service failure, at what point will the council appoint a full time, non-agency employee to ensure no further service failures?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

Social work recruitment is a national challenge and unfortunately like most other local authorities we rely on agency workers to ensure we

have sufficient capacity to deliver our statutory services. Often, they are covering long term sick leave or maternity leave, as is the case in other roles working with children, for example supply teacher cover. Just like permanent social work staff all agency social workers receive monthly supervision with their line manager which provides an opportunity to review progress of their cases. Some changes in social worker are as a result of the progression of the case through the council's current workflows as some teams fulfil specific roles in the workflow. Turnover of social work staff is high in most local authorities due to the challenging nature of the role and the levels of trauma and challenging behaviour they experience from some families they work with who do not welcome their intervention when there are child protection concerns. It is unfortunate when a worker leaves the council, and as a result this does mean that families will experience a change of social workers. There will always been planning (when possible) to ensure that there is a planned transition between workers. We only use agency workers who are highly experienced.

Mr Patel asked a supplementary question:

What is the council's plan? There is a family we have been liaising with who have been with Social Care for 9 months with 6 social workers so there is no continuity there.

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

We always allocate cases according to best fit for the case at that time. We cannot totally control whether or not staff choose to leave us, particularly with agency staff. The government has made some attempts to deal with that. They have now extended the minimum notice period agency staff have to give before they leave. Cases first go to the Duty Team, then the Assessment Team, then to the Long-Term Team. This means that 3 Social Workers will have been involved in that first phase. Normally the Social Worker allocated will be for the long-term but people can go off sick and need to be replaced. Permanent Social Workers can also leave and need to be replaced and this is the same for temporary Social Workers.

Mr Patel asked:

Are there equality reportings conducted for those professionals who are present at Child Protection Conference to ensure there are representatives of different backgrounds, gender, race, culture etc? If not what plans do they have to start recording this to ensure conferences understand parents and children's background and culture?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

There is no requirement to undertake equality monitoring in the statutory child protection guidance. The purpose of the conference is to bring together the group of professionals working with a family to ensure that the best information is shared and informs good decision making so that

children are well protected. As a result it would not be in any child's interests to shape attendance at conferences just to ensure that those present are representative of a wide range of backgrounds and culture. Children's services have a widely diverse workforce and will always take into consideration issues of diversity when allocating a worker to a family, but it is not always possible to allocate a worker that reflects a family's background or culture. All of our staff take unconscious bias training.

Mr Patel asked a supplementary question:

The purpose of that question was that mainly independent chairs are female and so are most Social Care professionals. Does that mean that there's not much male representation, so they won't be able to understand from a male's point of view? Are there any plans for that so conferences can understand parent's and children's backgrounds more appropriately?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

When we recruit workers for vacant posts, we recruit the best workers that we can. We take diversity issues into account. We follow employment legislation. But it's true that across a wide range of social care professions, male workers are underrepresented, and this is not unique to Leicester.

Mr Patel asked:

There is a huge disproportion of male social workers in Leicester Children's social services. What plans/incentives do Children's Social Care have to recruit more male social workers?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

The council's approach to recruitment and retention is based on our ability to "Grow our Own" social work workforce due to the continuing national challenges in this area of work. This includes Social Work Apprenticeships, the national Frontline programme that looks to attract graduates with high level degrees to undertake intensive workplace learning, overseas recruitment of qualified social workers, and recruiting newly qualified social workers and providing them with learning and development opportunities so that they can complete their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment as required by Social Work England. In all of the recruitment activity we undertake we adhere to current legislation to ensure that there is no discrimination against any candidate, and current legislation would not allow us to use incentives specifically for one group of workers based on a protected characteristic. Like most caring professions the majority of workers are women. Currently 5% of our front-line social workers are male.

Mr Patel asked a supplementary question:

I am a teacher. In my profession there are flexible working arrangements for females due to pregnancy, family etc. I don't know of similar incentives for male Social Workers.

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

The local council offer support for parents allows them flexibility to take leave and work flexibly.

Mr Patel asked:

Child Protection conferences memberships should include both male and female participants to ensure an understanding and reflection of cultural and diversity needs. In my own personal experience of 2 Child protection conferences and multiple core group meetings, I have not come across one male in any of those meetings. Does Children's social care have systems in place to ensure at least 1 male is present in child protection conferences? If not, what plans do they have to ensure fair equality and diversity in child protection conferences?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

As outlined in my response to question 3, the purpose of a child protection conference is to ensure that an appropriate safety plan is put in place for the child so that the child's needs are met, based on the knowledge of those working with the family. All of our staff receive training in anti-discriminatory practice, and it is also a fundamental requirement within Social Work England's practice standards. It is not appropriate to put in place such a requirement when a male worker attending a conference may have no knowledge or involvement with the family. The focus of the conference is ensuring the child's needs are met (under the principles of the Children Act with a child's welfare being paramount), and they are safeguarded from any risks that adults may pose to them.

Mr Patel asked:

I understand there are five independent chairs for Child Protection Conferences. how many are males/females? What plans do you have to have more male independent chairs?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

We recruit on the basis of appropriate skills rather than gender, in line with current legislation. If a suitable male applicant applies for any role and has the required skills and knowledge and through the selection process they are the best candidate then they will be appointed and employed by us.

Mr Patel asked:

In the last three years how many warnings of the vexatious policy have

been given by Children's Social Care to parents whose children are under a child protection plan? Who makes this decision and how is this managed to ensure the vexatious policy is not misused by the council and the parent's views are able to be shared?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

In the last three years we have issued three warnings to families and placed restrictions on their contacts with us. The warnings have been issued due to a number of factors, including some or all of the following; the number of contacts, the tone of communication, the language used, and threats made to staff. The decisions have always been joint decisions between the service manager responsible for the case and the complaints manager, with oversight from Heads of Service and the Divisional Director. Such action is permitted under the statutory complaints guidance. This is managed by staff logging contacts both before and after the warnings are given to ensure the restrictions are proportionate. Any improvement can lead to the restrictions being lifted. Continued inappropriate contacts/communication will lead to the complainant being classed as vexatious.

The letter informing people that we are restricting their contacts always tells them that any complaints they make will be read but not necessarily responded to. This ensures that any 'legitimate' complaints are not missed as they would be put through the complaints process. It also allows parents to express their views.

Mr Patel asked a supplementary question:

If a warning of vexation is given to a parent and they have a valid complaint, how will that be responded to, and will it just get ignored?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

If the complaint is valid and has not already been made, it will be addressed and progressed through the stages of the complaints procedure.

Mr Patel asked:

According to FOI submitted in Nov 24, agency social workers are paid on average £5440/month, whereas directly employed staff in the same department are paid £3495/month. This is almost £2000/month/worker extra for agency workers and does not include agency fees etc. Just under 20% of staff in CIN, CASP and LAC are agency workers. What plans do the council have to recruit social workers to ensure public money is not overspent in agency staff?"

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

The council's approach to recruitment and retention is based on our ability to "Grow our Own" social work workforce due to the continuing national challenges in this area of work. This includes Social Work

Apprenticeships, the national Frontline programme that looks to attract graduates with high level degrees to undertake intensive workplace learning, overseas recruitment, and recruiting newly qualified social workers and providing them with learning and development opportunities so that they can complete their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment as required by Social Work England. We have also developed career progression pathways to strengthen our ability to retain staff. Agency workers are in certain circumstances necessary to cover absences through maternity leave and long-term sickness absence so that we can fulfil our statutory duties.

Mr Patel asked a supplementary question:

At what point would the agency Social Worker be offered a permanent post?

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help responded:

After a period of 20-30 weeks to ensure we are confident in their practice, we would engage any agency worker to ask if wanting to become a permanent member of staff.

#### **114. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

#### **115. UPDATE ON YOUTH SUMMIT**

The Youth Representative presented an Update on the Youth Summit using the slides included with the reports pack. Key points to note were:

- Young people from Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland had taken part in October's Youth Summit.
- This was the first time that all of the participation groups had met together as one.
- The aim was to discuss Health and Social Care services and young people's user experiences.
- Themes were explored in group sessions and questions were formulated. The top 5 themes were:
  - Access to dentist appointments. Why weren't reminder alerts issued for regular check-ups?
  - Could there be improvements to Neurodiversity awareness?
  - Appointments with GPs, Schools and Councils left young people feeling 'unheard' and feeling were not taken into consideration.
  - There was a need to focus on 25-year-olds transitioning from SEND to provision. It was felt that this was an 'everything to nothing' situation.
  - Assistance was required in understanding information. Documents such as Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)



should be easy to read.

- The young people had made pledges to go back to respective groups raising concerns in their own areas.
- Young people had signed up to plan the next summit.

The Chair welcomed questions and comments from the commission. Key points to note were:

- This could be the start of a more collaborative approach, perhaps with health care services too. Similar feedback such as feeling 'unheard' was coming back from people with health issues.
- Points raised would be useful for the Health Care Commission.
- Young people seeking safety from abroad might share the experiences raised.
- It would be useful to involve a cultural consideration when exploring issues with SEND and young people arriving in Leicester.
- Some of the points raised were being worked on currently. Dental Care, preparation for adult life and Neurodiversity awareness were all under consideration. More widely, use of language was being examined.
- There was an active project exploring use of accessible language in EHCPs.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted
- 2) That the video presented be shared to the commission
- 3) Further consideration to take place on young people from overseas arriving to live in Leicester.
- 4) To keep the commission updated with future plans
- 5) Communication tools to be examined

## **116. UPDATE ON CHILDREN FROM ABROAD SEEKING SAFETY**

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report to provide an overview of children and young people who come to Leicester having arrived from abroad seeking safety.

The Deputy City Mayor for Social Care, Health, and Community Safety introduced the item, noting the following:

- Sensitivity of language had been considered and the young people arriving from abroad were now known as 'Children and Young People from Abroad Seeking Safety' rather than 'Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.' This was considered to be a more humanitarian term and was deemed to be more appropriate when supporting children experiencing trauma.

- Most young people arriving in Leicester were able to remain in the city. This differed to the situation for most other local authorities.
- The hard work of teams involved was acknowledged.

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help gave highlights from the report. Points to note were:

- There was a small increase in the numbers of children from abroad seeking safety. six additional children were now being looked after since the previous report came to scrutiny in June 2024.
- There was a slight increase (to 61) in the number of young adults aged 18-25 being supported by The Local Authority Leaving Care teams.
- There was an overwhelming majority of male young people being supported, with one female child within the Children Looked After Service. three female young people were supported by the leaving care team.
- The children and young people supported were largely of Afghan heritage, this was followed by those of Iranian and Syrian ethnicity, having predominantly Kurdish heritage.
- Pathways for children and young people arriving in Leicester were:
  - Spontaneous arrivals – such as those arriving on lorries.
  - The National Transfer Scheme – this had been created by central government to share responsibility for the number of children and young people across local authorities.
  - Those deemed by The Home Office to be of adult age and placed in adult accommodation (hotels) who were then referred to children's services due to concerns that they were not adults.
  - Sometimes arrangements took place with other local authorities, such as to reunite siblings who had been separated.
- Regarding placement options, children could be placed in foster care or children's residential homes. All young people under the age of 18 would have an allocated Social Worker.
- Those over the age of 18 were supported in semi-independent accommodation in the community. Assistance was given to access medical services such as dentists and opticians after an initial health assessment. Translation services were also provided.
- Support would be provided in attending Home Office appointments.
- Specialist provision provided included support from the Educational Psychology teams, support through creative arts, Leicester City in the Community football sessions, leisure passes, bus passes and support to maintain religious practices and faith.
- Considerations were made for those who were not awarded permanent asylum. Assessment time frames could impact on appeal rights for those reaching the age of 18 during decision making process.
- Support is given by the Red Cross where families had become separated.

- The Creative Journey Intervention was a safe space where adults could explore the arts. Projects were also in place with Bullfrog Arts.

The Chair invited questions and comments. Points to note were:

- There was not a set timescale for accommodating 18-year-olds in the city. The current housing crises could impact on matters. Those in dire need could receive funding for private lets but this was arranged on a need-by-need basis.
- There was constant dialogue nationally and locally to develop regional pools of Foster Carers for children from abroad seeking safety, with carers accessing additional trauma training.
- Age assessments were robust, due to the legal framework, challenges tended to be costly but there was a high level of confidence in the assessment process.
- Paragraph 3.16 of the report gave figures on age assessment outcomes, with 4 of the 7 assessments since January 2024 leading to an outcome of the young person being over the age of 18 years.
- It was vital in terms of safeguarding to ensure that placements of children and adults were done appropriately.
- The £2m received by the local authority in grant funding did not cover all expenditure. This was a matter which was petitioned for by The Local Government Association. An acceleration in claim processing times had helped matters.
- A challenge was presented with young people over the age of 18 who were unsuccessful at an age assessment appeal. They would not have the right to work in the UK and would not be able to claim housing benefit. However, under the Leaving Care Act, there was a responsibility of care, this led to strains on funding.
- Regarding Bullfrog Arts, Taiko drumming sessions were delivered as a means of stress relief.
- In terms of Ukrainian children, most were accompanied by family.
- Lessons learnt centred around incorporating local communities for trauma support. Collaboration work with other local authorities had included research on the experiences of children seeking safety on arrival in the UK and in other European countries. The voices of the children would be gathered to inform training.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) For further 6 monthly updates to come to scrutiny.
- 3) The proportions of 18+ and under 18's to be included in the next report.
- 4) For more information to come on trauma support provided by the Education Psychology service.

*Councillor Dr Moore left the meeting during the discussion of this item.*

## 117. PLACEMENT COSTS AND IMPOWER UPDATE

The Deputy City Mayor of Social Care, Health and Community Safety introduced the item.

It was noted that there had been a concern over the cost of bring in external consultants, so a limited time agreement had been put into place with the option to extend. It was noted that work could be developed and taken forward internally.

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education gave an overview of the work done with IMPOWER. Key points were:

- The value in care tool examined care skill requirements and associated costs.
- Appropriate placement of children relied on both elements.
- Some children were able to return to parents where cases of neglect had occurred previously, but parents had now developed necessary skills.
- The tool was utilized with two cohorts of children.
- Whilst there was a significant saving for the first cohort, the cost grew slightly for the second.
- There was an average saving of around £14k per week across the cohorts which was deemed to be a good return.
- Another advantage of the tool was having the ability to estimate costings for children first coming into social care and consider appropriate care delivery.
- The work with IMPOWER had discontinued but connections remained in place.

The Chair welcome questions and comments and the following was noted:

- The human element of the work was balanced with the financial aspect. Correct costing ensured that care needs were met.
- Functional Family Therapy care work was still in development.
- Increases in costs for children's social care were not due to increasing numbers of children. The problem came from the regulation of social care from a financial position.
- The value in care tool allowed for needs and costing to be assessed jointly. Conversations on appropriate care packages could then ensue. The goal was not to compromise on care.
- In terms of measuring success, every looked after child case was reviewed. Meetings took place with the young person to gather their views and ensure that their voice was heard.
- Checks were in place with external providers regarding both the care and cost elements.
- The Functional Family Therapy team enabled longitudinal follow up on

outcomes to take place at set ages. There was a success rate of over 90% in keeping children out of care 18 months after the end of support.

- All staff were trained in youth engagement and there was a 'child friendly' approach with reviews. Development was ongoing to increase confidence with this aspect of work.
- Each child who was not in contact with family had access to an independent visitor.

The Independent Visitor Service was recently nominated for a National Award.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted
- 2) For a 6 monthly report, including cover report, on the Family Therapy pilot.
- 3) Information on independent visitors would be sent to members.
- 4) For future reports to include more elements from the children's perspectives.

## **118. CHILDREN'S SERVICES: COST MITIGATION PROGRAMME OVERVIEW**

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report to provide an overview of the development and progress of the Children's Services Cost Mitigation Programme.

The Deputy City Mayor of Social Care, Health and Community Safety introduced the item noting the following:

- Internationally recruited staff had received a positive welcome from existing staff.
- A new children's home had opened in Aylestone, and a further home was to be completed in Braunstone by the Summer of 2025. Communications with the contractor had been highly successful, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of the children.
- The Deputy City Mayor of Social Care, Health and Community Safety recognised and commended the work of staff across the network of Leicester children's homes.

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education gave an overview of the report. Key points to note were:

- £2m had been allocated to Children's Services at the last budget. The various divisions had been successful in delivering within budget. Some surplus had been created.
- Around 3 posts had been lost, but historically these were NHS roles and

were likely best placed there. There was good rigour around vacancy management.

- Following the consultation on children's centres, information was awaited from Central Government surrounding models.
- Aspirations were to move towards more locality based social work teams. Updates would be coming to the commission regarding locality work with families.
- Multi-Systemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy had created a cost mitigation of £1.6m. Children had been able to remain at home with the support of their families.
- The numbers of children in the care of Leicester City had been reduced down from around 650 to 600. Many of these children had come from overseas.
- A Social Care Academy would be launched with Leicester universities to develop routes through education, leading to work in Social Care. More information on staffing and training would be coming to the commission.
- There was continued pressure on the High Needs Block. Demand for EHCPs was increasing. A change programme was upcoming.

The Chair invited the commission to raise questions and comments. Key points noted:

- A wide range of support was in place for Social Workers relocating from South Africa and Zimbabwe. This included a relocation allowance, assistance to secure accommodation, finding school places for dependants, training and regular catch ups with the Principal Social Worker. There had been work with local community groups and colleges to aid with the transition into the community.
- When assessing shared premises for children's services, it was vital to have an open process.
- Time frames for outcome decisions on children's centres were reliant on central government plans. Extra funding and resources would be available in the next financial year and a delivery project plan would be developed.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Commission would follow the progress of social work staffing and training.
- 3) For the Commission to be updated on work with families in the locality. A project plan would be required.

## **119. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26**

*As the reports on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme were related,*

*they were taken as one item.*

The Director of Finance submitted a draft report proposing the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2025/26 and the Capital Programme for 2025/26.

Key points included:

- The medium-term financial outlook was the most severe ever known. The Council was in the same situation as many other local authorities who were facing difficulties balancing the financial budget, some of which had issued a Section 114 notice.
- The Council found itself in this position due to a period of austerity which had reduced the scope to make further savings.
- Recent cost pressures had not been matched by government funding. Additionally, cost pressures were affected by a high demand for social care and a rise in inflation.
- The Council were fortunate to have one-off monies available, however, following the Chancellor's national budget in October, more constraints were anticipated.
- The Government understood the situation that councils were in, however, it was thought that new funding would be modest and amount to a real-terms cut in 'unprotected services' including those provided by councils.
- The report showed action taken by the Council. The strategy was to balance the budget up to 2028. The strategy was based on forecasts and was aimed at maximising one-off resources.
- It was not expected that there would be any longer-term government plans until next year.
- Strand 1 of the Revenue Budget involved releasing one-off monies in order to buy time.
- Reductions in the Capital Programme involved spending less and raising funds selling property.
- The strategy was reliant on one-off money to get to the 2027/28 financial year, after which there would be a gap of £90m.
- With regard to the one-year Capital Programme, there was no certainty over government funding. The government would publish a spending review in spring.
- The Capital Programme was linked to getting to a stable revenue position.
- The budgets were balanced for the next three years. This was the best outlook at this point.

The Commission was invited to ask questions and make comments. Key Points included:

- In response to concern raised that the detailed financial information was not adequately broken down into divisions and service areas, it was explained that since the reports went to all commissions, they focussed on the overall position. Additionally, in terms of reports focussing on children's services, it was ensured that financial implications were set out as clearly as possible. The need for a breakdown would be fed back.
- In response to a query on Personal Transport Plan, it was suggested that a lot could be saved through Personal Transport Plans as they were significantly cheaper. It was aimed to promote this option to parents by showing them the benefits.
- In response to a query about the fleet, it was not thought that there were any significant issues with the fleet at this point. It was being considered as to whether new routes could be taken by the buses in the fleet.
- In response to a further question about Personal Transport Plans and the impact on parents, it was explained that the Council had regular involvement in the parent and carer forum with SEND children. It was noted that in some cases the plans worked due to flexibility and choice. However, whilst they often worked for parents who wanted control over their time, for others it could feel like a burden.
- In response to further points raised on Personal Transport Plans, it was clarified that a basic mileage rate was provided and there could be negotiation beyond this around individual circumstances.
- Information would be sought as to whether the local safety schemes mentioned in the capital plan would include road safety schemes around schools.
- In response to a question regarding the big rise in capital expenditure on Children's Services from 2024/25 to 2025/26, it was explained that this was due to changes in government funding.

#### AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission be taken into account by the lead officers.
- 3) That the report be brought to Overview Select Committee prior to Full Council.

## **120. 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.

It was confirmed that the issue of Children's Homes was already under consideration by the Commission.

The work programme was noted.



## **121. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair noted that Councillor Russell would be leaving the commission and gave thanks for her contributions.

The meeting concluded at: 20:02