

# Cabinet – Tuesday 1 June 2021

## Agenda Item 8 (References from Other Bodies)

Notes:

1. Only the Chair of the referring body / motion owner may speak on a referral from Council, a Committee, or Scrutiny Committee (Cabinet Procedure Rule 2.3 (d) & (e)).

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**(a) Council (20 January 2021)**

(i) Motion – Helping Care Leavers in their Next Steps

*This Council resolves to request that Cabinet:*

*(a) ensure looked after children and care leavers are given the opportunity to consider their housing options in detail, including information about the housing market and entitlement to housing, which comprises:*

- (i) the deposits required for all types of rented housing;*
- (ii) how to access waiting lists for Registered Provider and Council housing; and*
- (iii) support to engage with any Choice Based Letting (CBL) scheme, when it is introduced.*

Response from Councillor Z Nolan (Cabinet member for Children and Families):

Every MK Looked After Child has a Care Plan and every Care leaver a Pathway Plan that is undertaken with them and ensures Housing and Accommodation options is an important element of this plan. This includes the often preferred option of 'Staying Put' with their carers whenever possible but also is designed to outline all available options as above where appropriate (as the above options will not be appropriate for all children). The Housing Allocation Policy has now also been reviewed in collaboration with Children's Services and there are clear processes and protocols in place to help young people make informed choices that are appropriate to their needs and circumstances

*(b) ensure when young people are ready to leave care, they are supported to choose the accommodation that will best suit them (given the constraints on local provision), and that they are given as much notice as possible;*

All Looked After Children have an allocated social worker and all Care leavers are offered a Personal Advisor (96% of Care leavers take up this support). Work has been progressing in this area to support our young people and over 95% of MK Care leavers are now in suitable accommodation in comparison to a National Rate of 85%. Work continues however to widen the accommodation options available for our Care leavers and to ensure any transition is undertaken in a timely way and at the pace which is appropriate for the young person.

*(c) ensure thorough training and mentoring for looked after children and care leavers, so that they are supported to gain the skills for increasing independence, including managing a household and budgeting/finance skills;*

The Education, Employment and Training (EET) for Looked After Children and Care leavers continues to be a priority for us and our Virtual School Head teacher has been working with our schools and Children's social care department to ensure our young people who as well prepared as possible to make the transition to adulthood. This includes Adult Services joining Looked After Children Reviews where appropriate prior to children's transition arrangements being confirmed and working with schools and wider education and work experience providers to help support. Despite the challenges seen in 2020 we have seen significant improvements throughout the year in the number of our Care leavers who are now engaged in Education, Employment or Training but this focus will continue.

- (d) encourage schools to include this information and training for all children; and*

Discussions are continuing with schools after a year of disrupted learning to ensure our children and young people are equipped for the life skills they will need on leaving full time education. We will continue to encourage and work with schools to support this learning

- (e) consider providing an information pack to young people as they register to vote at 18, or via the schools, and parents educating at home, at 16.*

The availability and content of Information, Advice and Guidance to young people and their families as young people approach adulthood is being considered with Housing and Children's Services. This may best be achieved through an on-line resource that can be clearly accessed and updated as necessary, but further discussions are also being undertaken with our Communications Department to ensure pro-active information is accessible to the right young people and families at the right time.

*That to achieve these aims, this Council also resolves to request Cabinet to:*

- (a) accelerate the planned review into the current process of how looked after children and care leavers move into their next stage of accommodation, and involve the Care Leavers Housing Champion, the Chair and Vice Chairs of the Community and Housing Scrutiny Committee, and the Corporate Parenting Panel in reviewing any proposals;*
- (b) investigate whether care leavers would be entitled to bonds for rent deposits in the private or social housing sectors, and consider plugging any gaps in entitlement, while still helping with the selection of alternative accommodation, often more suitable, such as shared*

*occupancy and supported accommodation; and*

*(c) consider whether more supported accommodation is needed.*

The review of Young Peoples accommodation options was brought forward and work started with senior officers across Commissioning, Housing, Adult and Children's Services in January 2021. This has more recently also included colleagues from Public Health and Planning. It is recognised that for the last three years our numbers of Looked After Children and Care leavers has remained relatively consistent, as have the numbers of young people presenting as homeless, therefore the processes and protocols in place across the departments have been revisited to strengthen working together practices. However, the increased complexity being presented by some of our young people needs to ensure a range of accommodation and support services are in place together, as if a young person has challenges with their accommodation this is rarely the only difficulty they are experiencing. Discussions are therefore progressing with our Public Health Service to consider a more in depth Needs Assessment to consider a full insight of need and that any gaps in entitlement or provision is well understood. Proposals from this work will be reviewed by the appropriate Committee, Panels and involved Members as proposed. This Assessment is also designed to help inform commissioning intentions and future need.

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**(b) Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee (13 January 2021)**

*That the Committee recommends that the Cabinet member responsible for Planning Policy be requested to consider the Committee's concerns that the infrastructure the city needs to grow is in place before any further expansion takes place.*

Response from Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council):

Plan MK is the current statutory planning framework for development proposals, including expansion of the urban area. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) was produced in 2018 and used during the independent examination of Plan MK to ensure it was sound and deliverable. The purpose of the IDP is to identify or confirm the key infrastructure needed to achieve the housing and employment targets contained in Plan MK. The IDP sets out the timing and sequencing of delivery to achieve these targets on a site by site basis. IDPs are intended to be kept 'live' and an update to the 2018 IDP is due to be completed during the summer of 2021.

Accelerated delivery of the MK East allocation in Plan MK is being made possible by the £95m of Central Government Housing Infrastructure Funding secured to assist in delivering the strategic highway infrastructure and the early schools and health provision that will serve the development. This infrastructure is planned to be in place by March 2024. In addition we are also negotiating a 'tariff-style' planning obligations package which will, over time, generate at least a further £175m to contribute to a range of local and strategic infrastructure, and make available land for local infrastructure. This replicates the successful tariff model

already in operation in MK, which has enabled a programmed approach to infrastructure funding and delivery.

Looking to the medium term, and separate to meeting Plan MK homes and jobs targets, funding was secured in the 2021/22 Budget to build a pipeline of Infrastructure projects as part of the Council's approach to Economic Recovery. The funding will be used to ensure the business cases for infrastructure projects considered important for the city are worked up in detail ready for submission to bidding opportunities. The funding will also be used to provide further staffing capacity to help develop the case for infrastructure projects further.

In terms of future growth and expansion linked to the longer term (i.e. to 2050 and beyond), a City Wide Infrastructure Study is being commissioned to fully scope and understand the requirements to support the level and ambition of growth. This work is aligned to the timescales of producing the next Local Plan (due now to be submitted for examination in 2024). This will provide a significant lead in time to grow the infrastructure required in the long term, and is intended to 'future-proof' the next Local Plan (to 2040) by building in anticipated capacity to 2050 where necessary.

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**(c) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (10 February 2021)**

*That the Committee recommends that the Cabinet member for Children and Families be asked to consider commissioning a Lifelong Learning Strategy for Milton Keynes*

Response from Councillor Z Nolan (Cabinet member for Children and Families):

Thank you to the committee for this recommendation which has been carefully considered.

The last 18 months for our children and our schools has been the most disrupted and challenging in living memory. There have been unprecedented demands on our schools, families, staff and children and young people in needing to adapt to the global pandemic and ensure as much continuity of learning as possible. In MK we can be proud of how our schools and education sector rose to the challenge presented and mitigated the impact of this pandemic for children's learning and young people's opportunities in the way they did. We consistently had more children in our schools than the national average and frequently had all our schools open offering high quality learning; in school for many of our most vulnerable and our keyworker children and on-line for the majority of our students. Many, who with their families, engaged and responded well to the learning offer, even when we had high levels of Covid in our city. They have all done an amazing job.

As all our children and young people have now returned to school, it will be important that we support our schools to focus on children and young people.

We do not underestimate the challenge they all face in returning to face to face learning. The young people themselves have told us too, the extent of the challenges they face. There is much to be done to keep schools safely open and to deliver measures to support children who have missed out on face-to-face education, including addressing factors such as curriculum content and quantity of teaching time in the coming months.

We have extensive ambitious plans for all children in MK this summer. Now is not the time for us to commission a separate local Lifelong Learning Strategy. It is important that in MK that we ensure we use all the influence and levers we can to progress strong learning pathways with high quality teaching and grow the learning opportunities for all our children and young people, with the aim of building potential and reaching aspirations. In order however for us to be able to achieve this in a coordinated way that improves the life chances of our residents it is important that we are able to align any future local strategy with the National direction for learning and to be able to focus properly on that task. Now is not that time. We all want to focus on our children and young people and I make no apology for doing that as we emerge from the pandemic.

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**(d) Community and Housing Scrutiny Committee (23 February 2021)**

*That the Committee recommends that the Cabinet member be asked to consider:*

- (i) That as part of its acquisition programme, the Council considers buying existing Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) when they come on the market. Although this would not necessarily increase the overall number of properties available for young people, properties which were well managed and maintained by the Council would enhance the reputation of this type of property as a solution to the current housing crisis for young people*
- (ii) That the Council considers building its own HMOs or shared households based on the model currently being developed by the YMCA.*
- (iii) That if the Council does develop its own HMOs or buys existing ones, a positive engagement programme with the local parish council and existing residents is required.*
- (iv) That if the Council does develop such properties thought is given to providing innovative parking solutions, such as building at first floor level with parking underneath at ground floor level.*
- (v) That consideration be given to encouraging householders with suitable, spare accommodation to consider taking young people in need of accommodation as lodgers.*
- (vi) That the expectation of the Committee is that over the next year there will be significant improvement in the provision of housing for*

*young people and the necessary support to help them maintain their tenancies.*

Response from Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Adults Housing and Healthy Communities):

Following these recommendations I have committed to further exploring the potential of this and reporting back at a scrutiny committee meeting later in the year, alongside a review of any appropriate policies.

With the announcement of the new cabinet portfolios it would be more appropriate at this time to reassess the level of housing need that we have for this age group in order to understand the current needs which would help inform the most appropriate course of action to deliver the best solutions.

We will also commit to working with our partners, such as the YMCA, to ensure that young people are presented with a range of housing options.

In relation to recommendation 'v' we have everything in place to launch Nightstop this summer which involves volunteer hosts opening their homes to young homeless people facing a night on the streets or sleeping in an unsafe place. Volunteer drivers and chaperones ensure these young people get to a place of safety. This has been delayed until the lockdown has been eased although a co-ordinator has been recruited, volunteer hosts are being sought with a media release and other communications about to be released.

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**(e) Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee (3 March 2021)**

*That the Committee recommends:*

- (i) That the Cabinet member for Public Realm and the Director of Environment and Property be asked to ensure that they take account of the following recommendations, at the relevant decision-making stages:*
  - a) That residents should not be forced to accept a wheeled bin if they had a good reason not to.*
  - b) The importance of ongoing communication and engagement with residents to ensure the appropriate changes in behaviour.*
  - c) That the impact of any service change on those with mobility or disability issues were addressed.*
  - d) That clarity was provided as to what will happen with side waste.*
- (ii) That the Cabinet member for Public Realm and the Director of Environment & Property be asked to ensure that they have explored all innovative schemes from around the UK and wider that may have provided solutions to some of the issues raised as part of the consultation and pilot.*

Response from Councillor Townsend (Cabinet member for Public Realm):

The recommendations of the Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee were largely responded to in the Delegated Decisions taken on the 23 March 2021 on the Local Authorities preferred waste collection methodology cumulating from the outcome of the waste consultation and findings from the waste collection trial. As such, it confirmed these services need to be universal in delivery and consistent in order to match the vehicles used and materials collected across the borough. This is consistent across all waste collection systems in the UK. However, households that were unable to accommodate wheeled bins deemed 'special kerbside properties' would receive an alternative service.

As part of the roll out of the kerbside waste service transition a dedicated engagement and communications programme will be compiled and delivered. The trial has identified which communications materials and approaches are best placed to support this and the communication campaign will include a variety of engagement approaches catering across a range of demographics to maximise awareness and education around the reasons for this change. The Authority can approach this change with confidence of significant support reflected by the responses to the waste consultation.

The Delegated Decision confirmed that any impact of any service change on those with mobility or disability issues would be addressed. A dedicated communications programme would be undertaken for all residents who currently receive the assisted collected service as a result of a mobility or disability issues to ensure that this would be managed in advance with the transition to the new waste collection service.

A forthcoming clarification on side waste has been proposed by Officers to manage side waste and will be taken forward by the portfolio holder in due course.

As part of the evidence gathering for the Delegated Decision it was agreed that there would be ongoing research and subsequent decision made on the proposed aforementioned 'special kerbside properties' which are unable to accept the proposed primary waste collection service. This research and review has now commenced and a draft service proposal for 'special kerbside properties' will go through the Democratic process in early 2022 in good time for implementation and mobilisation of the new services in 2023.

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**(f) Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Sub Committee (31 March 2021)**

*That the Committee recommends:*

- (i) that all decision makers ensure that due process has been followed in the making of any decision; and*
- (ii) that guidance be developed and provided to Parish Council's/Neighbourhood Plan Steering Groups on the role of Council officers in the neighbourhood plan process.*

Response from Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council):

As with any planning decision there is a risk of legal challenge, but that risk is managed by ensuring that the regulations are followed and that the Council's decision-making process is clear and transparent. Neighbourhood planning officers work closely with the Council's Legal Team and, if necessary, seek Counsel's opinion to ensure that due process is followed.

The Council prepared a guidance note in August 2017 that sets out the role of officers in the neighbourhood plan process. This guidance note can be viewed on the Council's website. The guidance note will be reviewed and brought up to date, where necessary, and circulated to all parish councils and neighbourhood plan steering groups.

Specifically, it is proposed to amend page 16 of the guidance (Stage C – Submitting the Plan for Independent Examination) to read:

"As you are finalising the plan ready for submission, it makes sense for the parish or town council to discuss with the Neighbourhood Planning Support Officer any concerns they might have about the plan, especially whether it meets the basic conditions. Whilst the local planning authority should provide constructive comments on the emerging plan, they are not required to come to a formal view as to whether the draft plan meets the basic conditions."

This specific change (as underlined) is to clarify the guidance contained in the National Planning Practice Guidance on Neighbourhood Planning (see paragraph 53).

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