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Minutes of the meeting of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE held on WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY at 7.00 PM

Present: Councillor Carr (Chair)
Councillors Baines, K Bradburn, Brown, Cryer-Whitehead, D Hopkins,
V Hopkins, Marlow, Miles, Montague, Raja and Wales and D Main

Officers: M Heath (Director of Children's Services), M Denny (Group Head
Learning and Inclusion), T Molloy (Principal Community Learning
MK), R Mascarenhas (Youth Participation Worker) and R Tidman
(Committee Services Manager)

Apologies: None

Also Present: Councillors Nolan (Cabinet member for Children and Families) and M
Bradburn (Chair, Corporate Parenting Panel), M Manley (Learning
2050 Project Manager), R Massie (Chair, MKEP/Learning 2050
Strategic Board), L Di Mauro (Milton Keynes Youth Cabinet), T Poyner
(Milton Keynes Youth Cabinet) and M Zaman (Milton Keynes Youth
Cabinet)

CYP23 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillor Marlow advised that she was a parent of a child that
attended a special school and also a parent governor at a special
school and therefore she took no part in the discussion on the
provision of in school support for SEN students during the latest
lockdown.

CYP24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 2 December
2020 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

CYP25

IN SCHOOL SUPPORT TO ALL SEN STUDENTS DUE TO COVID-19

Witness: M Heath (Director of Children's Services)

The Chair indicated that it had been brought to her attention that certain schools were unable to provide in school support to all SEND students due to Covid-19. Therefore, in accordance with the powers under Section 100B 4(b) of the LGA 1972, the Chair asked that the Committee considered this matter as an urgent item.

The Director of Children's Services provided an update in relation to SEND students in school. Currently 13% of children with an EHCP (458 children) had been offered a school place throughout the latest lockdown. In terms of those at special schools, 22% of children were in attendance. Challenges due to social distancing and maintaining staff numbers had meant there had been a challenge to provide places for all those who were entitled to one. However, he remained confident as to how the Council was delivering its services to SEND Students.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Director of Children's Services be asked to keep the Committee informed on this issue and if necessary, circulate an update if there are any significant changes to report.

CYP26

COVID-19 UPDATE

Witness: M Heath (Director of Children's Services)

The Director of Children's Services provided an update as to how schools and children's social care services had been impacted by Covid-19 in the last two months.

It was noted that calls into the children's social care service continued to rise, particularly since Christmas. There were the usual challenges and concerns that family have but most of these did not meet the threshold for social care intervention. There had been an increase in relatively lower level of domestic abuse. Calls and activity were higher but those that moved into referrals remained relatively consistent. The main challenge was for those families that accessed family support services which was not necessarily available at the moment. The service continued to focus on supporting our foster carers and driving forward with recruitment of new foster parents. Looked After Children numbers had remained stable but the Council has had to seek more inter-agency placements. A number of permanency arrangements had progressed with adoptions not having been impacted unduly by the lockdown.

With regard to schools, the numbers of children in schools was around 15% and there was more than 3,000 children attending early years settings. No schools have had to close due to Covid in this period and discussions were ongoing regarding the conditions that would be needed to ensure a successful reopening of schools. Returning to schools would be a challenge for a number of children for example in terms of lost learning, socialisation and pastoral needs. Alongside concerns about the health and resilience of the workforce.

Over five hundred children's social care staff had been able to be vaccinated so far. This included foster carers, special school teachers and social workers.

In response to questions the Committee noted that:

- (a) The Council was providing a good quality free school meal, including during school holidays;
- (b) There had been a problem with the boiler at Caroline Haslett School and more information was requested as to why an alternative facility was not provided while the school was closed;
- (c) The number of children in school was considerably higher during the latest lockdown than in previous ones due to changes in the guidance as to who was eligible to attend school. This had offered some challenge particularly when the Covid-19 rate was at its highest in the borough;
- (d) Schools had been asked to respond as to whether there was still an outstanding need for the supply of laptops or other devices;
- (e) Schools were expected to publish their remote learning model however this was not consistent across schools and it was right that this was bespoke to individual schools;
- (f) With regard to what the recovery/catching up looked like there was no appetite for repeating the year again but all other options were on the table and it was likely that there may be a national position or more local or regional approach;
- (g) The pressure on foster placements was part of the wider national picture. The area is doing well in terms of the percentage of children placed within in-house foster placements. There was still a sufficiency shortfall which meant an increased use of outside agencies which has led to an increase in costs;

- (h) Family Time still needed to be balanced with social distancing requirements and guidelines. There was a RAG rating system in terms of those children who needed to be supported with face to face contact with their parents;
- (i) With regard to the return to school, there was a need to understand the concerns of parents or where there might be persistent absences and not move straight to fixed penalty notices; and
- (j) YCab members fed back that the screen free days that had taken place had made a change to their online lessons and had been very interesting to take part in.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee's thanks and appreciation to all school leaders, teachers, support staff and children's social care staff for all the work they have done throughout the latest lockdown be noted.
2. That the Director of Children's Services be asked to provide an update on the impact of Covid-19 on schools and Children's Services as a standing item at each meeting.
3. That the Director of Children's Services be asked to provide the Committee with an update on the closure of Caroline Haslett Primary School due to an issue with the boiler.

CYP27

SKILLS AND LEARNING

Witness: T Molloy (Principal Community Learning MK)
M Manley (Learning 2050 Project Manager)

The Committee received a presentation from the Principal Community Learning MK and the Learning 2050 Project Manager.

The Committee noted that:

- (a) There were classes available to support the most disadvantaged families, for example, enabling parents to develop the skills to support their children with their school work;
- (b) There was a need in Milton Keynes for a single lifelong learning strategy which would pull together the current strands or work and also incorporate the impact that Covid-19 may have on how people work or helping adults to develop new skills where they may need to retrain;
- (c) On-line learning had increased competition for local providers who may be best placed to support their local communities;

- (d) YCab had in the past organised a series of life skills workshops for young people which had been well received;
- (e) The Inclusion Board had been looking at what happens when schools reopen in particular with regard to supporting disadvantaged children;
- (f) SMART outcomes from the Learning 2050 programme would be useful so that it was easier to see whether progress was being made or not

RESOLVED

1. That the witnesses be thanked for their contribution to the Committee's scrutiny of this item.
2. That the Cabinet member for Children & Families be asked to consider commissioning a Lifelong Learning Strategy for Milton Keynes.

CYP28

DRAFT 2021/22 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received and noted the draft Work Programme for 2021/22.

RESOLVED

1. That the draft Work Programme for 2021/22 be received and noted.
2. That if members of the Committee have any suggestions for items for scrutiny which are within the Committee's remit during 2021/22, they be fed into the Committee's Planning Group.

CYP29

INFORMATION AND MONITORING ITEMS

The Committee received the Action Plan addressing recommendations from the Ofsted Focused Visit – September 2020.

RESOLVED

1. That the Action Plan addressing recommendations from the Ofsted Focused Visit (September 2020) be noted.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8:46PM

The recording of this meeting is available to view on the Council's YouTube Channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/MiltonKeynesCouncil/videos>