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Minutes of the meeting of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on THURSDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor M Bradburn (Chair)
Councillors Baines, Brown, D Hopkins, V Hopkins, McQuillan, B Nolan, Raja and Rolfe.

Officers: M Heath (Director of Children's Services), M Denny (Group Head: Education, Learning and Inclusion), A Griffiths (Group Head: Adult Services), C Marriott (Head of Delivery: SEN and Disability) R Mascarenhas (Youth Participation Worker) and A Melia (Overview & Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors K Bradburn, Cryer-Whitehead and Marlow.

Also Present: Councillor Z Nolan (Cabinet member for Children and Families), M Bulmer (Milton Keynes Youth Cabinet), L Di Mauro (Milton Keynes Youth Cabinet) and I Oduko (Parent Governor Representative).

CYP12 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillor D Hopkins declared an interest as a member of the Chair of Governors for a number of schools across Milton Keynes. Councillor V Hopkins declared an interest in Item 7 as an employee of New Chapter Primary School. Councillor Brown declared an interest in Item 7 as an employee of the Denbigh Alliance Multi-Academy Trust, and Councillor Raja advised for transparency that she is a trust member of 5 Dimensions Trust, which oversees Shenley Brook End School.

CYP13 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 15 July 2021 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

CYP14 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

None.

CYP15 COVID-19 AND YOS INSPECTION UPDATE

Witnesses: M Heath (Director of Children's Services).

The Director of Children's Services introduced the report and provided a verbal update on the impact of Covid-19. The salient points included:

- The Director of Children’s Services expressed satisfaction that the return to school had been largely positive, with a high percentage of students in school.
- Some schools returned at different times due to Covid-19 testing regimes and regular discussions had been held with the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Department for Education, and Public Health colleagues to monitor attendance statistics.
- Staff and communities involved in the Summer of Play were thanked for their contribution, with over 30,000 individual activity sessions having taken place.
- Children’s Services have endeavoured to respond to the challenges posed by the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme in the best way possible, in conjunction with colleagues, external partners and the Home Office.
- It was advised that the displacement of people from Afghanistan had created a difficult situation, with examples cited of children and young people arriving unaccompanied in Milton Keynes, which had given Children’s Services additional responsibility for welfare and accommodation.

Members of the Committee made comment and heard:

- Children’s Services were congratulated for the successful Summer of Play and it was noted that Parish Councils throughout Milton Keynes had also helped to provide funding and activities for children and young people throughout the summer.
- It was noted that the MK Parents and Carers Alliance had contacted members of the Committee concerning children that were excluded from the activities. Concerns were also expressed that children from Bedford Borough had been allocated places on the Summer of Play scheme whilst some in Milton Keynes had not.
- In response, the Director of Children’s Services confirmed that he had attended a meeting with the MK Parents and Carers Alliance alongside the lead Cabinet Member. It was advised that the full set of data arising from the Summer of Play was not available in order to fully assess provision and resources, and the Director of Children’s Services resolved to provide further detail directly to councillors.
- In response to questions regarding the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme, it was noted that answers were difficult

to provide as a result of the fast-moving nature of the situation. A significant number of those who had arrived in Milton Keynes may relocate to areas where established links exist.

- As a result, long-term approaches have been weighed against short-term benefit. It was suggested that allocating school places in Milton Keynes may not have been beneficial and therefore formal education had been taken directly to those who require it.
- Discussions had been held with senior leadership teams in schools across the Borough to help provide support for children transitioning back to school following the disruption caused by the pandemic.
- In response to a question regarding the promotion of vaccines for over-16's, it was advised that this issue was discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 8th September 2021.

Following this discussion, the Director of Children's Services introduced the YOS Inspection report and highlighted the salient points:

- The action plan attached to the report was a draft and partially complete, because it had not been fully endorsed by all members within the multi-agency partnership. A meeting had been booked with relevant partners in order to seek agreement.
- The Director of Children's Services advised that he considered the report to be positive in the context of Covid-19, with particular reference to the endorsement of the early intervention strategy adopted by Milton Keynes Council.

The Committee commented and heard as follows:

- Concerns were expressed that the system may be liable to treat the protagonists as victims, rather than the victims of crime.
- It was confirmed that the YOS continued to operate throughout the pandemic, which created additional challenges as the offices used by the service were not Covid secure. As a result, it was necessary to source alternative facilities for meetings with children and young people.
- It was suggested that the professionalism of the team was more relevant than the location from which they operated. The "good" rating arising from the inspection was acknowledged

but it was suggested that the service should not lack ambition and therefore strive to achieve an “outstanding” rating.

- In response, it was advised that the professionalism of the team was good and contributed to the high-performing nature of the service, which was verified within the inspection report.
- Members of the Committee commented that they had recently recommenced meetings in their designated space – the Civic Offices. However, there was some concern that young people may be unable to access a suitable facility to address their needs.
- Sections of the report which refer to “child” or “children” were also highlighted as a concern. It was recommended that in future reports, the term “children and young people” was used in order to incorporate all those within the 0-18 age bracket.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Planning Group be requested to consider scheduling further updates on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, mental health in schools, and the data arising from the Summer of Play for the next Committee meeting.
- 2) That the Director of Children’s Services provide the Committee with more information on facilities available for meetings with children and young people.
- 3) That, in future reports, reference is made to “children and young people” in place of “child” or “children”, to reflect the wide and varied range of needs of those between the ages of 0-18.
- 4) That Milton Keynes Council be recommended to strengthen the support available to victims of crime by young offenders.

CYP16

TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD FOR DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE

Witnesses: M Heath (Director of Children’s Services), C Marriott (Head of Delivery: SEN and Disability) and A Griffiths (Group Head: Adult Services).

The Head of Delivery: SEN and Disability, introduced the report and drew attention to legislation from the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014, which frame the work undertaken by the team. Further salient points included:

- It was reiterated that successful transitions had been prioritised for several years, as this had been vital in

maximising the abilities of children and young people with special educational needs.

- A relatively small number of children had reached Adult Services and required extra support. The previous year was unusually large, with 46 children and young people needing further support, and nine of these had required a placement.
- The average cost of a placement to support a young person was noted as approximately £2,000 per week.
- The transitions of children and young people to adulthood was cited as the area of greatest demand, and therefore the area which had demanded the greatest focus.
- The number of children with an EHC Plan increased from 2068 in 2019 to 2431 in 2021.
- It was advised that foundations have been put in place to alleviate pressures in the future. At the time of writing, 40 young people were scheduled to transition to Adult Social Care in 2022, with 36 scheduled for the same pathway in 2023.
- Within Adult Services, a high proportion of young people with learning disabilities were reliant on Day Services, which closed in March 2020 due to the impacts of Covid-19. Following discussions with service providers regarding funding and support, these services have subsequently reopened for use.

Members of the Committee commented as follows:

- Members of staff involved in supporting the transition of children and young people to adulthood were commended on the report and the plans in place to provide support.
- It was advised that further outcome data regarding young people in Milton Keynes would be gathered to ensure that the aspirations of residents had been fulfilled by the services.
- A Special Educational Needs and Disability inspection was conducted within the previous three years and rated the services available as good.
- Attention was drawn to the importance of an individualised approach towards residents, and emphasis was placed on mitigating anxiety around the transition to adulthood by making this a gradual process.

RESOLVED –

That the Children and Families and Adult Services teams be thanked for their work throughout the pandemic in ensuring that the needs

of residents who had transitioned between the respective services were prioritised.

CYP17

ENSURING ALL SCHOOLS ARE GOOD OR BETTER

Witnesses: M Heath (Director of Children’s Services), M Denny (Group Head, Education, Learning and Inclusion).

The Group Head, Education, Learning and Inclusion, introduced the item and advised that the “good” rating referenced within the report is an Ofsted judgement, with the ambition to achieve this for all schools by 2024.

Further salient points were highlighted:

- Pre-schools, group-based setting and child-minding provision were also assessed against the Ofsted criteria, with 99% of 255 settings classed as good or better.
- Members were advised that Milton Keynes Council has endeavoured to identify high-quality practitioners that would benefit from professional development opportunities, alongside investment in the correct areas. It was emphasised that regular meetings with Ofsted had taken place to support this.
- 88% of schools had been rated as good or better, including those awaiting inspection. With the schools awaiting inspection removed from the data, the figure can be considered as 91%.
- It was noted that this figure was favourable against the national picture but needs to be raised in order to realise the ambitions cited in the report.
- Attention was drawn to the evaluation system for maintained schools within the report, with a particular focus on the “Amber 2” and “Red” statuses. Amber 2 denoted that a school had complicated issues, with complex resolutions, whilst Red status indicated that a school required improvement and an accompanying action plan.
- It was confirmed that where it had been agreed that a maintained school qualified for “Amber 2” or “Red” status, the Group Head, Education, Learning and Inclusion had acted as Chair of the school performance board.
- Under the previous Ofsted framework, schools rated as “outstanding” were not assessed without data that suggested a concern. As a result, some schools in Milton Keynes had not been assessed for over a decade. It was confirmed that the new

Ofsted framework had removed these restrictions and inspections within these schools were expected.

- It was noted that Milton Keynes Council had no statutory authority over school improvement within the academy sector.
- Invitations were sent to the fourteen Multi-Academy Trusts and four Standalone Academies to attend meetings with the intention of achieving greater levels of collaboration and improvement.

Members of the Committee commented as follows:

- It was suggested that the Committee can aid the programme by continuing to act as advocates within the community, which could be achieved by meeting with governing boards facilitated by MKC.
- In response to these suggestions, it was noted that regular meetings with the Chairs of Governors had commenced roughly four years ago and were considered a valuable source of communication and engagement.
- Attention was drawn to the potential of engaged teachers with opportunity for continuing personal and professional development.
- In response to a question concerning safeguarding within academies, it was noted that the Council was responsible for reporting concerns and would seek to gather information on this basis.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That training on the Ofsted framework be provided to the Boards of Governors of schools in Milton Keynes.
- 2) That teachers be encouraged to attend sessions on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) alongside increased efforts to engage with students, parents, and the wider community.
- 3) That the Group Head, Education, Learning and Inclusion, be requested to provide further updates on the progress of this strategy at a Committee meeting in 2022.

CYP18

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL ACTION PLAN

Witnesses: M Heath (Director of Children’s Services) and Councillor M Bradburn (Chair, Corporate Parenting Panel).

Councillor M Bradburn introduced the item as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel and advised of a necessary correction, as the panel

meets three times a year, rather than every three months as stated in the report.

The Director of Children's Services advised that some elements of the Action Plan have been rated as amber but suggested that at the beginning of a more typical school year, these areas were prioritised.

Councillors who have not yet put themselves forward for the Champions Model but are able to contribute were encouraged to do so. Following this, attention was drawn to Care-Leavers Week, scheduled to begin on Monday 25th October.

RESOLVED –

That the Corporate Parenting Panel Action Plan be received and noted.

CYP19

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Chair drew attention to the Committee Work Programme for 2021/22 and advised that if members of the Committee had any suggestions for items for scrutiny which were within the Committee's remit during 2021/22, they be fed into the Committee's Planning Group.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the draft 2021/22 Work Programme 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.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 20:53 PM

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