

Brighton & Hove City Council
Children, Young People & Skills Committee

4.00pm 12 September 2022

Council Chamber, Brighton Town Hall

Minutes

Present: Councillor Allbrooke (Chair), John (Deputy Chair), O'Quinn (Opposition Spokesperson), Brown (Group Spokesperson), Grimshaw, Hamilton, Lloyd, McNair, Meadows and Nield

Co-optees: Ms D Boyd and Mr A Muirhead

Part One

1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

(a) Declarations of Substitutes

1.1 There were none

(b) Declarations of Interest

1.2 There were none

(c) Exclusion of Press and Public

1.3 There were no Part Two Items and so the press and public were not excluded from the meeting.

1.4 The Chair's statement on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

We are holding this Committee during a period of national mourning and today we join with people around the world in noting the sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

As elected politicians, we recognise many people will be saddened by the news and wish to pay their respects. For that reason, before we proceed to the items on the agenda, I ask the Committee, assembled Officers and Co-optees to join me in a minute's silence.

One minute silence

I wanted to let the Councillors know that the Corporate Parenting Board, scheduled to take place on Monday 19th September will be postponed. Arrangements for the meeting will be confirmed.

The loss of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II may bring up feelings that we have all experienced or will experience. These are feelings that we will all recognise of grief and mourning. Grief for those who have had a significant impact on our lives, whether we knew them personally or not, can emerge in different ways and I wish both the Queen's family and everyone who loved her my sympathies at this time. If you are experiencing complicated feelings of grief and need support, Cruse, the bereavement charity has a free helpline as well as some helpful advice on their website.

Our new monarch, King Charles III, has been an advocate of many of the young people this committee strives to support through the Prince's Trust Charity, which he founded in 1976. The Prince's Trust supports young people to get their lives back on track – whether they are experiencing homelessness, unemployed, struggling at school or leaving care. This includes work in our city, such as the 12-week Team Trust programme which runs from Greater Brighton Metropolitan College. This is something we can all take inspiration from.

2 MINUTES

- 2.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

I would like to highlight that on Saturday, my partner Benedict and I entered a civil partnership downstairs at Brighton Town Hall. Going forward please refer to me as Councillor Allbrooke. Thanks of course to the ceremonies team for a wonderful ceremony.

I would like to give my congratulations once again to all our city learners who were moving on from their schools and colleges this summer. Many young people have been celebrating fantastic GCSE and A-Level results and we are proud of all our city learners who have done incredibly well after a difficult couple of years. We wish them all the very best of luck for the future. A future meeting of this Committee will provide a report which gives a breakdown of achievement for the different areas of the city and look at those who face barriers to accessing education.

4 CALL OVER

- 4.1 All items were reserved for discussion.

5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- 5.1 There were no Petitions, Written Questions or Deputations.

6 ITEMS REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

- 6.1 There were no items referred from Full Council.

7 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

7.1 There were no Petitions, Written Questions, Letters or Notices of Motion.

8 ETHNIC MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EMAS) UPDATE

8.1 The Chair advised that due to technical issues it was not possible to show any visual presentations, and so this item has been deferred to a later meeting of this Committee.

9 FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS

- 9.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Families Children & Learning regarding the procurement of a hybrid framework agreement and the award of the hybrid framework agreement and individual placement agreements, for foster care placements in the independent sector.
- 9.2 Cllr O'Quinn sought clarification regarding the allocation of the weekly payment of £826 to independent foster care agencies. The Children's Placement Manager advised the agency receives this payment to manage the placement, including training of the foster care parents and supervisions, with a percentage – which is determined by the agency – allocated to the foster parents as an allowance. The Executive Director Families Children & Learning also noted there is an element of profit as whilst the payment covers the outlined costs, very few independent foster agencies are not for profit, which is why placing local children with Brighton and Hove carers in the city is a priority.
- 9.3 Cllr O'Quinn also queried how the allocation of financial support operates in line with the individual special needs of the foster child. The Children's Placement Manager confirmed £826 is an average as the amount paid is dependent on the referral sent to the agency and varies across agencies and age brackets.
- 9.4 Cllr Lloyd asked if the hybrid framework would increase the number of in-house carers within the city. The Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding & Care advised this is the aim. As the framework runs jointly with East Sussex County Council there will be increased awareness that placements are needed across Sussex which should promote an increase across the area, if not within the city. However, given the national shortage of foster carers, the framework may not guarantee an increase in placements but would cap finances to limit further costs where supply does not meet demand.
- 9.5 Cllr Grimshaw questioned how the cost-of-living crisis has been factored into allowances, particularly to ensure foster care families in Brighton and Hove can cover rising expenses. The Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding & Care explained that where foster parents become dissatisfied with the independent foster agency, they come to us. Currently, we offer an annual uplift with an additional 5% to reflect the cost-of-living crisis and so, where agencies do not respect the impact of the crisis on carers, the team would work with the family to move across to the Local Authority.
- 9.6 Cllr Brown noted that we are not currently charged by East Sussex County Council for access to the framework and wondered if this arrangement will continue and if there will be any notable contractual changes. The Children's Placement Manager confirmed

there is no plan to pay a fee as we work jointly with East Sussex and offer resources including evaluation, moderation, specifications, and variations.

- 9.7 Cllr Brown also queried if we pay West Sussex County Council and Southampton City Council for access to these frameworks. The Children's Placement Manager advised no fee is paid to West Sussex whereas with Southampton we would be required to pay a fee should we chose to go down that route because we were unable to meet our requirements via East Sussex.
- 9.8 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- (i) Granted delegated authority to the Executive Director of Families, Children & Learning to:
 - (1) Take all necessary steps to procure and award a hybrid framework agreement jointly with East Sussex County Council (ESCC), but led by ESCC, for the provision of foster care placements in the independent sector for an initial term of four (4) years commencing on 1 April 2023 with an option to extend for up to a further two (2) years and providing for the re-opening of the agreement to new applications on the second and fourth anniversary of the term commencement i.e. on 1 April 2025 and 1 April 2027, and
 - (2) Procure and award call off contracts and individual placement agreements from the hybrid framework agreement outlined at (1) above.
 - (ii) Agreed that an up-date be given to the CYPS committee in April 2024 and a report given in April 2025 on the performance of the hybrid framework agreement with ESCC for the provision of foster care placements in the independent sector.

10 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT SERVICE PROGRESS REPORT

- 10.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Families Children & Learning which provided an update and progress report on the Home to School Transport (HTST) Service.
- 10.2 Cllr O'Quinn raised concerns regarding the increasing costs of the service and requested details of a contingency plan to prevent further overspending. The Head of Service outlined steps which are being taken including monitoring of eligibility criteria, setting realistic expectations of how children's needs are met, mindfulness of the city's sustainability goals, consideration of appropriate minibus use, working with colleges to review timetabling and closely working with SEND colleagues on route management and planning.
- 10.3 Cllr Meadows asked how we could improve consultation figures given the low response rate. The Head of Service advised a rolling survey is available to parents all year round, which they are alerted to via HTST communications, the Parent and Carer's Council and their social media channels. Nevertheless, it remains challenging to increase engagement without inundating parents, though there is a potential to link in with SEND activity to identify further opportunities for feedback.

- 10.4 Ms Boyd enquired if there were plans to look at post-19 services, to which the Head of Service confirmed they are meeting with the Head of SEND and Head of SEDS on 21st September to discuss arrangements further.
- 10.5 **RESOLVED:** That Committee noted this progress report on the Home to School Transport (HTST) Service.
- 11 PROPOSAL TO EXPAND HILL PARK SPECIAL SCHOOL BY ESTABLISHING A SATELLITE SITE AT THE CEDAR CENTRE**
- 11.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Families Children & Learning which provided feedback from the recent formal representation period following the issue of Statutory Notices in respect of the proposal to expand Hill Park.
- 11.2 Cllr O'Quinn asked what the impact of the Hill Park expansion would be in terms of reducing the budget for children having to go out of the city for specialist placements. The Assistant Director Health, SEN & Disability Services confirmed the proposal should have a positive impact on this spend since this type of provision has been targeted as it covers the profile of need that is going out of the city the most.
- 11.3 Given current waiting times, Cllr Nield raised concerns regarding the admissions criteria requiring an autism diagnosis and an EHCP to be in place and asked how the wait is being reduced. The Assistant Director Health, SEN & Disability Services advised CAMHS have commissioned an external agency to undertake assessments, which has significantly reduced the waiting time. The Executive Director Families Children & Learning also revealed NHS Sussex has put additional funding in place to address difficulties in the neurodevelopmental pathway.
- 11.4 Cllr Meadows wondered what the expected savings of the provision would be, which the Assistant Director Health, SEN & Disability Services estimated to be significant, saving around £10,000 per placement, with fewer high-cost placements required due to earlier intervention, and reduced transport costs due to local provisions.
- 11.5 Ms Boyd queried details of plans for SEND children with social, emotional, and mental health difficulties, who are not eligible for a place at Hill Park and whose needs cannot be met at Homewood, and other cohorts where provision is lacking including post-16 with learning difficulties. The Assistant Director Health, SEN & Disability Services confirmed social, emotional, and mental health provision is the focus for this autumn, with data analysis underway and a presentation scheduled for this week's SEND Partnership Board to determine the next steps in the development of this form of provision.
- 11.6 **RESOLVED:** That Committee agreed to confirm the proposal contained in the Statutory Notice that Hill Park School should expand by establishing a satellite site at the former Cedar Centre with effect from September 2023.
- 12 2021/2022 FAMILIES CHILDREN & LEARNING PERFORMANCE REPORT**
- 12.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Families Children & Learning which offered a summary of the performance of the Families, Children and

Learning (FCL) directorate and provided an overview of business and improvement plans for the year ahead.

- 12.2 Cllr Brown queried the justification for the amber RAG rating for the attainment gap under Objective 2 in Appendix 3, questioning if this should be red due to the pandemic's impact in widening the gap. The Assistant Director Education & Skills confirmed the pandemic has had a significant impact for disadvantaged outcomes nationally, however, the performance rating accounts for the fact that a strategy has been accepted by the Committee and implemented.
- 12.3 Cllr O'Quinn wanted clarity on the red RAG rating for youth services under Objective 3 in Appendix 3. The Assistant Director Education & Skills advised this rating reflects that a youth hub has not yet been established, however, the team are currently awaiting notification from the government in relation to opening the round of bidding for the Youth Investment Fund to progress this.
- 12.4 Cllr Hamilton asked if there is a significant delay for EHCPs and if so, what is being done to reduce the waiting time. The Assistant Director Health, SEN & Disability Services confirmed there has been a 33% increase in EHCP applications in Brighton and Hove and staff shortages of caseworkers and management. Resultantly, a redesign has been undertaken, extra finances have been allocated to improve capacity and additional officers and the necessary management structure have been identified to manage the volume of EHCPs received.
- 12.5 Cllr McNair questioned why the number of children being educated at home remains high and if this is an area of concern. The Assistant Director Education & Skills advised there has been a rise nationally which is being monitored, however, they would be happy to present a report in a future meeting to outline figures and provide an update on the work that has been done locally, regionally, and nationally. In Brighton and Hove, families who educate at home are closely monitored and visited by the relevant team.
- 12.6 Ms Boyd queried why the RAG rating for several points relating to learning difficulties under Objectives 2 and 3 in Appendix 3 were amber. The Assistant Director Health, SEN & Disability Services advised many of the points are interlinked and require additional work with the relevant commissioning team. In relation to the points on independence and resilience, work is being done to develop direct payments and to ensure there is an increase in the number of payments to service users and their families.
- 12.7 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee
- (i) Noted the current performance of the directorate.
 - (ii) Noted the business and improvement plans for the year ahead.

13 SCHOOL OFSTED PRESENTATION

- 13.1 The Head of Education Standards & Achievements provided an update on the latest Ofsted inspections for schools in the city.

13.2 Cllr Grimshaw questioned why some of the early years settings did not have a previous Ofsted grade, to which the Executive Director Families Children & Learning confirmed further details can be provided via a written response.

13.3 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the report.

14 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

14.1 No items were referred to the next meeting of Council.

The meeting concluded at 5.50pm

