

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Lewes on 12 March 2020.

PRESENT Councillors Charles Clark, Angharad Davies (Chair), Michael Ensor, Kathryn Field, Roy Galley, Tom Liddiard, Laurie Loe, Jim Sheppard, John Ungar (Vice Chair) and Francis Whetstone.

Lesley Hurst, Assistant Director (Business Development), Diocese of Chichester Representative
Simon Parr, Catholic Diocese Representative
Matthew Jones, Parent Governor Representative
Nicola Boulter, Parent Governor Representative

LEAD MEMBERS Councillor Carl Maynard, Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor Bob Standley, Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability

ALSO PRESENT Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services
Keith Hinkley, Director of Adult Social Care and Health
Fiona Wright, Assistant Director, Education and ISEND
Stuart McKeown, Senior Democratic Services Advisor

59 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

59.1 The Committee RESOLVED to agree the minutes as a correct record.

60 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

60.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Trevor Webb and Trevor Cristin, Diocese of Chichester representative.

61 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

61.1 There were none.

62 URGENT ITEMS

62.1 There were none.

63 RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR) 2020/21

63.1 The Committee discussed its input into the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources process and possible future improvements. The Committee's comments included:

- Members welcomed the process for consulting with the scrutiny committee over its priorities for the use of the additional one-off funding for 2020/2021. In particular, the Committee noted that of the five top priorities identified by the People Scrutiny RPPR Board, four were subsequently agreed by Cabinet.

- Members also discussed the one-off funding options which Cabinet had not approved and noted the possibility that provision may be made for the following revenue projects within the Priority Outcomes and Transformation Reserve:

- Ref L – ASC Home Care Commissioning
- Ref I - ASC Assessment & Care Management journey
- Ref J - ASC Behavioural Insight
- Ref K - ASC Bedded Care
- Ref M - ASC/CS IT Care Management System

In response to a query about the process for making decisions about whether to proceed with any of the above options, the Director of Adult Social Care clarified that approval would be subject to a business case which identified clear benefits. Members were also informed that the ability to take forward the above options would be dependent on other areas of activity and the outcomes of further integration work with the NHS.

63.2 Members particularly welcomed the decision to approve funding in support of the 'No Wrong Door' option for Children's Services (ref E in Appendix 1 to the covering report). Given the importance of the initiative and in response to a request from the Committee, the Director of Children's Services undertook to provide at an appropriate time an update on progress with implementation.

63.3 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report and request that the Director of Children's Services provide an update for the Committee at an appropriate time on progress with the 'No Wrong Door' initiative.

64 PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

64.1 The Committee discussed its Work Programme which is comprised of a number of ongoing scrutiny reviews, reference groups and planned reports. Set out below is an overview of the key items discussed.

Initial Scoping Reviews

School Exclusions

64.2 The Committee agreed at its meeting in June 2019 to appoint an Initial Scoping Board to explore issues relating to the high rate of school exclusions in East Sussex. Having discussed the Board's findings, the Committee agreed to proceed with a formal scrutiny review based on the broad lines of enquiry set out in the report appended to the work programme item. It was therefore RESOLVED to appoint:

1. Councillors Field, Liddiard and Loe and Matthew Jones and Nicola Boulter (Parent Governor Representatives) to conduct a review of issues relating to the high rate of school exclusions in East Sussex; and
2. Matthew Jones to act as Chair of the Review Board.

Suggested Topics

64.3 The Committee discussed developments relating to the coronavirus national emergency and the challenges facing the Adult Social Care and Children's Services departments. The Committee therefore agreed to add to its work programme an option to consider local responses to the national emergency which could then be explored further at an appropriate time.

Scrutiny Reference Groups

Educational Attainment and Performance Scrutiny Reference Group

64.4 Councillor Roy Galley informed the Committee that at its meeting in January the reference group were provided with an update on provisional attainment results for the academic year 2018/19 and a briefing on data relating to the Early Years, Primary and Secondary phases. Councillor Galley comments included highlighting the 'very good performance' in Early Years and some of the challenges identified by the Children's Services Department within the primary and secondary phases.

Health and Social Care Integration Programme Reference Group

64.5 Councillor Davies informed the Committee that the reference group had been provided with a briefing in January and that the Director of Adult Social Care had undertaken to provide a further briefing in April.

Strategic Commissioning Review of Early Help - Scrutiny Reference Group

64.6 The Committee were informed that the reference group met in January. The primary purpose of the meeting was to provide Members with an update on the Department's negotiations with alternative service providers (with regard to the de-designation proposals considered by the Lead Member for Children and Families on 7 October 2019). In response to queries raised by some Members, the Director provided additional detail regarding individual negotiations.

64.7 The Committee RESOLVED to amend the work programme in line with the items agreed in paragraphs 63.3, 64.2 and 64.3 above.

65 STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

65.1 Councillor Roy Galley, as Chair of the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE), introduced the report and highlighted several items for the attention of the Committee. This included discussing take-up levels of Religious Education (RE) for both the GCSE and short courses and related to that, SACRE's concern that some schools may not be meeting the required standard for the provision of RE.

65.2 In response, the Director of Children's Services discussed the evolving national situation and the drive for more school-led and school-supported events in aid of the leadership and teaching of RE. Within this context the Committee were informed that whilst the Children's Services Department can provide some limited support, it is ultimately for schools to decide how they approach the provision of RE. In response to a further question about the funding of SACRE, the Committee were also informed that it is the role of the East Sussex School's Forum to determine the level of funding for SACRE.

65.3 The Committee also discussed its views on the importance of helping young people to develop an understanding and tolerance of different faiths and the importance of RE in supporting this. Related to this, and in response to a question about whether it had become more difficult for RE to be selected as a GCSE subject, the Committee were informed that some key national developments might have some impact on take-up levels in future. These developments include, for example, the implementation in September 2019 of Ofsted's revised 'education inspection framework' which requires schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum and deliver a breadth of experience. Many schools are adjusting to the implications of this requirement against the backdrop of the continuing importance of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Such adjustments could in future lead many schools to re-evaluate the value of RE, which in turn might contribute to improving take-up rates.

65.4 The Committee RESOLVED to note the work of SACRE in supporting schools and improving the quality of religious education, especially in maintained secondary schools.

The meeting ended at 12.28 pm.