

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee held on 19 November 2020.

- PRESENT: Councillors Charles Clark, Angharad Davies (Chair), Michael Ensor, Kathryn Field, Roy Galley, Tom Liddiard, Laurie Loe, John Ungar (Vice Chair), Trevor Webb and Francis Whetstone.
- Lesley Hurst, Assistant Director of Education (Diocese of Chichester)
- LEAD MEMBERS: Councillor Bob Standley, Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability
Councillor Bill Bentley, Lead Member for Communities and Safety
Councillor Nick Bennett, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources
- ALSO PRESENT: Philip Baker, Assistant Chief Executive
Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services
Mark Stainton, Director of Adult Social Care
Mark Whiffin, Head of Finance
Tom Hook, Assistant Director for Planning, Performance and Engagement Division
Ben Brown, Consultant in Public Health
Justine Armstrong-Smith, Safer Communities Manager
Caz Kearton-Evans, Strategic Commissioning Manager – Substance Misuse
Michaela Richards, Joint Strategic Commissioner for Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Services
Kaveri Sharma, Equality and Inclusion Manager
Stuart McKeown, Senior Democratic Services Adviser

74 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

74.1 Subject to the correction of a typographical error in paragraph 70.2, the Committee RESOLVED to agree the minutes as a correct record.

75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

75.1 Apologies for absence were received from Trevor Cristin, Director of Education, Diocese of Chichester (Lesley Hurst, Assistant Director of Education attended as a substitute).

76 RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR) 2021/22

76.1 Philip Baker, Assistant Chief Executive, introduced the report by providing an overview of the challenging context within which the RPPR process for 2021/22 is taking place. This included highlighting the ongoing uncertainty in relation to the level of demand that will be placed on services in the coming months and the level of resources available to support them. Members also heard that the government spending review will cover a one-year period, with details to be released on the 25th of November. Furthermore, the Council is also waiting for further detail about potential government initiatives regarding services provided by the Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Health Departments. This makes financial and budget planning and relatedly the role of scrutiny especially challenging this year.

76.2 Set out below is a summary of the key issues discussed by the Committee:

- The Committee discussed the impact of the pandemic on levels of income generation over recent months and asked for further detail on this. The Committee agreed that understanding the Council's projections for future levels of income would assist the People Scrutiny RPPR Board's discussion on 17 December.
- In response to a query, Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services, confirmed that the additional funding identified in the previous year for the 'No Wrong Door' initiative would continue. Given the decision taken during the previous RPPR round to roll forward savings proposals relating to safeguarding and the key worker element of Early Help services, the Director also confirmed that he felt it would be prudent to defer those savings for a further year given the covid pressures families are facing.
- The Committee discussed the impact of Covid-19 on how services are delivered and how staff are interacting with the public. In particular Members asked for clarification about the steps being taken to embed new ways of working so as to ensure services continue to be effectively delivered. In response, Members were informed that Departments have adapted their working practices in a range of ways in the short term and have continue to seek to deliver face-to-face services wherever possible (in accordance with Public Health guidance). Members were also informed that a longer-term assessment of potential new ways of working is being undertaken. This assessment will seek to embed new working practices which improve customer service at the same time as potentially delivering efficiencies. Although Members also heard that whilst there is scope to develop technological solutions to help improve customer service, many services will continue to need to be delivered in person.

76.3 The Committee RESOLVED to request that additional detail about the impact of the pandemic on levels of income generation is available for the meeting of the People Scrutiny RPPR Board on 17 December 2020.

77 PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

School Exclusions.

77.1 Due to the impact of COVID-19 and its effect on the availability of schools to contribute to further work on the review, the Committee agreed to continue to pause activity, with the intention to recommence it at a suitable future date.

Loneliness and Resilience Scoping Exercise.

77.2 The Committee were informed that it is anticipated the Scoping Board will meet in January 2021, with the outcome of the meeting being reported to the March meeting of the Committee.

Elective Home Education

77.3 The Committee discussed the list of potential scrutiny review topics set out on its work programme. With regard to the topic of elective home education, Members were informed that there has been an increase in the numbers of children and young people who are being home educated (with the majority of that total being home educated as a matter of choice). The Committee reaffirmed its interest in issues relating elective home education. As a result, Members agreed to retain the topic on its list of potential scrutiny reviews and to consider whether to undertake a scoping exercise when circumstances allow.

Educational Attainment and Performance Scrutiny Reference Group

77.4 The Committee were informed that a meeting of the reference group is planned for early 2021.

Schools Coping with Change – the Way Forward

77.5 The Committee acknowledged receipt of the update on progress with implementing the recommendations set out in the scrutiny review of 'Schools Coping with Change - the Way Forward'. Councillor Roy Galley, Chair of the Review Board, thanked the Children's Services Department for its support of the review and for the update on progress with implementation.

77.6 The Committee RESOLVED to retain on its work programme the items discussed in paragraphs 77.1 and 77.3.

78 ANNUAL REVIEW OF SAFER COMMUNITIES PERFORMANCE, PRIORITIES AND ISSUES

78.1 Tom Hook (Assistant Director for Planning, Performance and Engagement) introduced the item by providing an overview of some of the key issues set out in the report. Justine Armstrong-Smith (Safer Communities Manager), Caz Kearton-Evans, (Strategic Commissioning Manager – Substance Misuse) and Michaela Richards (Joint Strategic Commissioner for Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Services) were also in attendance and provided additional detail in response to queries raised by Members. A summary of the key issues discussed is set out below:

- **The Relationships Programme:** Members asked for clarification about how the Relationships Programme is delivered in primary schools (the programme aims to help young people and children build resilience and recognise when and how to ask for help and teaches basic techniques for resisting pressure to do something dangerous, unhealthy or which makes them uncomfortable). In response, and depending on the topic, the Committee were informed that sessions are delivered in partnership with Sussex Police and the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. The Committee also heard that the Department provides all schools in East Sussex with a directory of programmes. This enables individual schools to select sessions which are relevant to their circumstances.
- **Serious Violence Bill:** In response to a query about the Serious Violence Bill and its implications for East Sussex, the Committee heard that it sets out amendments to the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) and place duties on schools, police, councils and health authorities to prevent serious violence. In support of this aim the Bill will require the prevention of serious violence to become an explicit priority within Community Safety Partnerships and includes a focus on early intervention. At the time of the meeting no announcements had been made regarding funding to meet these priorities.
- **County Lines:** In response to a query about levels of County Lines related criminal activity, the Committee were informed that this had unfortunately continued in recent months, although it may have become more visible to Police during lockdown periods. Stopping County Lines activity continues to be a policing priority at both the regional and national levels. Accordingly, and as part of its work to reduce serious organised crime, the East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership have listed County Lines as one its key priority areas in its Business Plan for 2020/23.
- **Homelessness and prison leavers:** The Committee discussed the relationship between the criminal justice system and homelessness. In particular, Members asked for more detail about the steps being taken to support prison leavers who are at risk of homelessness upon release. In response, the Committee were informed about initiatives such as the East Sussex Trailblazer project. This aims to minimise the number of prison leavers facing homelessness and in turn, reduce the risk of them re-offending. In support of this a part-time probation officer and a part-time community rehabilitation company officer have been embedded in the Rough Sleeper

Initiative Multi-Disciplinary Team (a team which is comprised of health, mental health, social care, substance dependency and housing specialists who provide direct access to support services).

- **Tackling extremist activity:** In response to a query regarding steps being taken to tackle far-right and other extremist activity in East Sussex, the Committee were informed about the Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) which identifies risks in East Sussex and the wider region. Members were also informed that there are currently a number of Channel cases in the county (Channel is part of the national Prevent strategy and is a multi-agency approach to identifying and providing support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism). The Committee also heard that the Council has strong partnership links with relevant agencies.

78.2 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

79 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE ETHNIC MINORITY POPULATION OF EAST SUSSEX AND STAFF

79.1 Tom Hook (Assistant Director for Planning, Performance and Engagement) and Kaveri Sharma (Quality and Inclusion Manager) introduced the report and responded to a number of questions asked by the Committee. A summary of the key issues discussed is set out below:

- **PPE (Personal Protective Equipment):** The Committee asked whether factors such as discrimination or stigma played any part in contributing towards a lack of access to PPE for Black, Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) care home workers. In response Members were informed that whilst these factors had been highlighted at the national level, the evidence suggests that in East Sussex any accessibility issues were primarily caused by initial problems with supply chains. Although the issue of supply has now been resolved and there are secure routes to access this provision.
- **Numbers of BAME Care Home workers in East Sussex:** Members asked whether more data was available on the number of BAME care home workers in East Sussex. In response the Committee were informed that whilst information is available for East Sussex County Council staff, the Department does not have access to data for independent care homes (as they are private businesses). However, based on evidence available at the national level, it is evident that a large percentage of care home workers are from BAME backgrounds. It is therefore an important task to examine the role that ethnic origin may have with regards to infection rates.
- **Evidence of Covid-19 impact on BAME staff:** The Committee asked the Department to comment on the impact of Covid-19 on BAME staff in East Sussex. In response Members heard that there is no robust local data available on infection and death rates linked to Covid-19. This is because death certificates do not include ethnicity, and more than a quarter of test results do not include ethnicity. At the national level, however, evidence indicates that BAME populations have suffered a disproportionate rate of infection and deaths. The reasons for this are not clear, but some initial research suggests that it may be partly because ethnic minority staff are more likely to work on the front line in lower graded roles, may be less likely to raise concerns and are more likely to be agency staff, or nightshift workers. Members were informed that further work is being undertaken to quantify what the impact has been locally and what can be done to help address it.

79.2 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

The meeting ended at 12.25pm.

Councillor Angharad Davies
Chair