

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT 7.00PM, ON  
WEDNESDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2022  
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors L Robinson (Chair), M Farooq, D Over, R Ray, B Rush, A Shaheed, H Skibsted and Co-opted Member Parish Councillor Michael Samways

**Also in attendance:** Tiffany Chan Youth Council Representative

**Officers Present:** Jonathan Lewis, Director of Education  
Fran Cox, Assistant Director of Education Capital, and Place Planning  
Belinda Evans, Complaint Manager  
Charlotte Cameron, Democratic Services Officer

**Also Present:** Councillor Lynne Ayres, Cabinet Member for Childrens Services, Education, Skills, and University.  
Councillor Ray Bisby, Cabinet Advisor to Cabinet Member for Childrens Services, Education, Skills, and University

**24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Farooq, Councillor Fenner and Councillor Lane.

Apologies for absence were also received from Dr Andy Stone, Statutory Education Co-opted Member Representing the Roman Catholic Church and Peter Cantley, Statutory Education Co-opted Member Representing the Church of England.

**25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

Councillor Over and Councillor Rush declared a non-pecuniary interest as they were both members of the Transport Appeals Committee.

Councillor Skibsted declared a non-pecuniary interest as she is the Chair of Family Voice Peterborough.

**26. MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 OCTOBER 2022**

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 4 October 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**27. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS**

No call-ins were received.

## 28. ANNUAL CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINT REPORT 2021/22

Before the introduction of the first item, the Chair noted congratulations to Nicola Curley, Marya Ali and the Young Inspectors team as they had won a National Voice Award from the Charity, Coram.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the Annual Childrens Social Care Complaint Report for 2021/2022.

The purpose of the report was for the Committee to fulfil the regulatory requirement under the Children Act 1989 that the complaints procedure for children and young people are included in an annual report which would be presented to the relevant scrutiny committee.

The Complaints Manager and the Cabinet Member for Children Services, Education and the University introduced the report and highlighted key points including:

Members were reminded that this was a mandatory report required within Childrens Social Care Statutory Regulations. An appendix had been included on non-statutory complaints for children's social care as well as education services for the first time.

The statutory complaints performance was detailed in Appendix A and Members were advised that complaints had returned to normal levels after a drop due to the covid pandemic. Of all complaints, 67% received in 2021-2022 had been upheld which had been in line with the Ombudsman regulations.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members thanked the Officer for the inclusion of the non-statutory complaints.
- Members referred to the removal of conciliation meetings and sought clarification on whether there was another alternative in place. The Officer advised that the Ombudsman had asked for that process to be removed and that the complaints guidance had been updated to ensure the customer would be contacted from the beginning.
- Members queried what was required for a complaint to be considered. Members were advised that there was clear statutory guidance on what can be accepted and who from. It was further advised that if a complaint was not eligible, the team would ensure that it was dealt with by the right team.
- The Officer advised that all complaints must be recorded but could not guarantee that all would come through. Members were given the example that if a complaint had been resolved within 48 hours via a phone call, the Complaints Team would still need to be notified of the complaint.
- Members referred to the service improvements at stage 1 on page 26 and sought clarification on their progress. The Officer advised that the information was seen at stage 1 when the comment response would be issued. A quarterly report would then be issued for the Complaints Team to identify any trends that would link into service improvements, and this would be presented to service directors.
- Members queried if this system worked, and the Officer advised that it could be improved as her team were involved in the quarterly meetings pre-pandemic and would like to have that oversight again.
- Members sought clarification on how unrealistic expectations of the complaint process were dealt with. The Officer acknowledged the question and highlighted that it may not always be an unrealistic expectation and it is about what sort of information was provided upfront for parents.

- Members requested that the Director for Childrens Social Care review how better clarity could be given to service users on the expected service timeframes to help avoid complaints based on unrealistic expectations.
- Members queried how the external members on stage 3 panels were chosen. The Officer advised that Coram voices provided qualified complaint investigators who would be recruited because of their background in investigation or legal work.
- Members noted that as Coram provided the panel members, there had been an increased reliability that if a panel needed to be called, there would be panel members available at short notice.
- Members referred to the accessibility of the complaints procedure and sought clarification on who were determined to be customers. The Officer advised that both children and other users like foster carers could access the procedure. However, it was advised that those who accessed the procedure would be dealt with differently depending on their role in the process.
- Members referred to the data on page 28 and queried if there had been double counting of complaints from a child and their parents. Members were advised that often a complaint from a child would refer to something separate to what a parent may complain about, and that the data referred to each individual complaint.
- Members referred to the recent Ofsted Report for Clare Lodge and sought clarification on why the report stated there had only been one complaint given the views presented in the Ofsted report. The Officer advised that Clare Lodge had a complaint book that was dealt with on site and that only the complaints submitted through the Council's procedure were noted in the report.
- The Director of Education advised that Clare Lodge residents included children from all over the country and parental complaints would go through their parent authorities. Members noted that a log was used to deal with complaints which independent inspectors and Ofsted had access too.
- Members sought clarification on whether the complaints from Clare Lodge had led to service developments. The Complaint Manger confirmed that the young people in Clare Lodge had access to the complaints system but as they do not fall under our local authority, their complaints were dealt with elsewhere.
- Members were pleased to see the compliments section and queried how well known the process was. Members were advised that each department kept a log of their compliments and that there was a compliments form on the PCC website which would be shared with the relevant team.
- Members referred to the quarterly reporting and requested that the Complaint Manger review her team's involvement in the quarterly review of complaint outcome meetings.
- Members thanked the Officer for the reports and suggested the Officer display trends in the non-statutory complaint's appendix in the next report so the Committee could see the direction of travel.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Consider the report and make recommendations for further scrutiny if deemed appropriate.
2. Consider Appendix C which is provided for the first time regarding non-statutory Children's and Education complaints and comment on the level of data they may require in future reports.

The Committee also requested that the Director of Childrens Social Care:

- Provide the committee with a briefing note on how better clarity can be given to service users on expected service timeframes to help avoid complaints based on unrealistic expectations.
- Share with the Committee the link to where service users can find this information on the Council's Website.

The Committee also requested that the Complaint Manager provide the committee with an update on her team's involvement in the quarterly review of complaint outcomes for social care, including any work undertaken to review this forum.

## **29. TRANSPORT TRANSFORMATION**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the Transport Transformation Strategy.

The purpose of the report was to obtain the views and approval of the Committee on the Transport Transformation Strategy.

The Assistant Director Education Capital and Place Planning and the Cabinet Member for Children Services, Education and the University introduced the report and key points raised included:

This report set out the proposed position and way forward for the home-school and passenger transport strategy. It outlined the current position in relation to transport for the city and what the proposals were for the future. There had been various issues effecting transport such as capacity, modernisation and the external transport market.

The growth in Peterborough would have an impact on Special Educational Needs (SEN) and mainstream school placement requirements and transport budgets, which paired with the rise in inflation would have a significant impact on the cost of transport provision. The strategy was a joint piece of work with Cambridgeshire County Council to develop solutions.

It was noted that situations like Stagecoach bus services were out of the team's control but that there would remain an obligation to young people and adults to deliver transport services. The team would continue to work to create an environment to support access to the service of high-quality provision.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members referred to solo routes and sought clarification on why the cost for each journey was so high. The Officer advised that the cost per route varied and depended on the provision needed. For example, there were some children that needed high level ambulance provision which would cost £400 a day.
- Members were advised that the aim of the strategy would be to diversify the procurement of transport services to achieve better value for money per child per route.
- The Officer advised that large savings could be made through merging routes and that work on this would be ongoing. Members noted that they would like to see the alternative options considered, the action plan and savings progress in a secondary report.

- Members referred to the rural isolation section on page 41 and queried how rural isolation would be prevented. Members were advised that it was crucial for this strategy to work with the place planning and school organisation plan.
- Members were advised that work had been done to ensure that local children were going to school in their local area, but considerations had to be made regarding rural geography.
- Members followed up and queried how it would be ensured that village children attend village schools within a reasonable distance. The Officer advised that work would be undertaken to support small schools to consider their transport options in a difficult economic environment.
- Members noted that a key target in the place planning strategy was to be mindful of the village setting and the impact new school and housing developments would have on that.
- Members referred to the recent growth in the city and the requirement to perform statutory duties on less money and queried if any pressure had been put on central government to raise these issues. The Officer advised that it was a difficult situation and that all policies would be reviewed to consider if there were areas that were over-providing. There would be a push to work differently with families and communities to reassert what transport provision could be with the potential offer of things like personal transport budgets.
- Members noted that this was a national problem and national government had been lobbied with a consistent message from local authorities across the country.
- The Director for Education added that costs are benchmarked and that it would be hard to compare to other local authorities as Peterborough had a rural secondary school unlike some of the statistical neighbours.
- Members questioned if this strategy had been developed in line with other strategies related to SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) transport. The Officer advised that it was the right thing to send local children to their local school and in whatever capacity they could, the strategies would align to make that happen.
- Members were advised that current pressures included Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) considerations.
- Members asked if there was a team who worked with local schools to support local children to attend their local schools. The Officer advised that transport delivery had benefitted by being within the education service as the team could incorporate admissions, place planning and transport considerations.
- Members queried whether two adults were required to be present when a child travelled in taxi. The Officers advised that appropriate and rigorous safeguarding checks were in place and a risk assessment would be completed. Most routes used a passenger assistant based on the needs of the child to ensure appropriate provision.
- Members noted that the schools where the transport costs were upward of 11-million-pound were special needs schools outside of the authority which children travelled to, to receive the right provision.
- The Youth Councillor referred to local transport bus journeys and sought clarification on work done to prevent bullying and poor behaviour. Members were advised that when there had been incidents where the child had been removed from that transport provision. Members noted that it was sometimes difficult to deal with as there was a duty to provide the child with transport provision.
- The Youth Councillor queried how alternative options like biking were dealt with in cases of extreme weather. Members were advised that parental mileage solutions could be offered and that it was important to get the young people's voice on how

they would prefer to travel to school. There had been considerations of what work could be done to encourage people to use cycle routes.

- Members asked what the furthest distance a Peterborough child travelled outside of the city for school. The Officer advised that South Cambridgeshire was the furthest with an approximate 1-and-a-half-hour drive.
- Members noted that a review had been undertaken to evaluate journeys on time rather than milage as a better means of determining an acceptable journey time.
- The Director for Education added that distance would not be the only consideration as other factors like parental preference, residential schools and a child's needs would also play a role.
- Members queried if there were criteria in place to provide alternative provision due to extreme weather. The Officer advised that there were no provisions in policy terms, but every route review includes a section on the weather. For example, on dark nights would the route be appropriate for the child to walk to or from school.
- Members referred to the eligibility criteria and the work around the communication of decision-making processes and sought clarification on how this would work for children. The Officer advised that it would be easier for mainstream transport as route decisions are based primarily on distance. However, there would need to be a focus on SEND provisions as there were more considerations that need to be made.
- Members noted that the child's education health care plan would be considered on a yearly basis to ensure that the right service is provided.
- Members queried what the expected distance for a child to bike to school was and the Director for Education advised that this was 2 miles up to 8 years old and 3 miles for 9 and above.
- Members noted that alternative offers could include the Council providing a bike so that child could have some independence in going to school. This would be a cost saving measure and would also benefit the child.

The following recommendation was made by Cllr Over and seconded by Cllr Ray, that the Transport Transformation Strategy be reviewed so that the rural implications be amended to read prevention of rural isolation from education provision with high priority given to village children attending their local village school.

The Committee voted **UNANIMOUSLY** in favour of the recommendation and the recommendation was **CARRIED**.

### **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Committee also requested that the Assistant Director Education Capital and Place Planning consider bringing a second report to the Committee based on the alternative passenger transport strategy options considered and to present to the Committee the action plan.

### **RECOMENDATION**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED to approve** the Transport Transformation Strategy subject to the **RECOMMENDATION** that the rural implications be amended to read prevention of rural isolation from education provision with high priority given to village children attending their local village school.

**30. SERVICE DIRECTOR REPORT, EDUCATION INCORPORATING THE PORTFOLIO PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDRENS SERVICES, EDUCATION, SKILLS, AND THE UNIVERSITY**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the Service Director Report for Education which incorporated the work under the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Skills, and the University.

The purpose of this report was to outline the latest position on Education in Peterborough. It covered national changes and the three key areas of service provided in Peterborough. The report also outlined other key progress areas in the continued focus on improving educational outcomes.

The Director of Education accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Childrens Services Education, Skills and the University introduced the report and highlighted key items including:

The Cabinet Member advised that this report had not included an update on their portfolio and a full portfolio update report would be brought to the next meeting.

The Director for Education noted that the service had been busy, and the report had been important to identify what had happened. The report referenced the national position as it was important to show how the service area had and would continue to respond to policy changes. It was noted that Peterborough's education service was the third lowest funded in the country and that brought significant challenges to service delivery.

The section on admissions highlighted the significant growth in new pupils in the city and this was as challenging as it had ever been, but the School Organisation Plan would help support service delivery.

The Director for Education wanted to celebrate the report and highlighted that the school results were the best Peterborough had ever had. The Committee were advised to recognise the significant work done in schools to reach those performance targets.

As requested, data on exclusions had been included in the report, with information on how the service operated, what strategies were in place and what was done to improve the service.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members congratulated the work of all schools in the city.
- Members referred to the shortage of places and sought clarification on whether schools could increase their offer of 2 or 3 classes per year group. Members were advised of the statutory pupil admission numbers (PAN) process for maintained schools which the council were responsible for.
- Members were advised that the provision of school places was monitored and if it felt that the PAN's were decreased or increased with a significant negative impact, they would be reviewed.
- Members sought clarification on what had been done to support schools that had capacity issues. Members were advised that maintained schools were supported through redundancy costs and restructure plans. The team would work closely with schools to support and offer advice on how best to deal with the change in capacity.
- Members referred to academies who were not declaring themselves as a financial concern and sought clarification on how many of those there were. Members were

advised that financial management in Peterborough was good, and schools held good reserves.

- Members noted that schools would be fine for the next fiscal year but beyond that there would likely be some issues.
- Members were advised that there were different processes to deal with financial deficit in academy and maintained schools. Academies had to set a balanced budget for their trust or there would be intervention from the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). For maintained schools the Council required a balanced budget, if that could not happen, they would agree a repayment deficit budget with the Council.
- Members were advised that there would be no bail out payments from national government if a school was struggling. In the past, the education sector had been protected from cuts, but no confirmation had been given to confirm if this would remain the case.
- Members referred to page 108 and the submission of a business case for a feasibility study for the Duke of Bedford School and sought clarification on the process and how long it would take. Members were advised that all capital money spent within the Department would be reviewed by a third party and the submission of a business case was a requirement prior to going out to market for funding.
- Members were advised that the money had been secured for the feasibility study and the team would move forward with the plans. In the long term, the money used on the feasibility study could be recovered via Section 106 funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- Members were advised that children could move schools across local authority borders and that Peterborough's mobility of pupils had been exceptionally high. The increased number of school applications would influence the Transport budget and work would be done to support this.
- Members referred to the Peterborough Organisation Plan and queried the expansion of Eye Primary School and the effect it would have on local school children. Members were advised that there were challenges through funding and work in the surrounding villages would be reviewed.
- Members referred to penalty notices for the removal of children for holiday during term time and queried what work had been done around this. Members were advised that cost of the fine was tied to a national policy, but that other work had been done to increase attendance which was at or above national average.
- Members were advised that there had been a push to work more with families to determine a good outcome for the young people.
- Members queried the future development forecasts and sought clarification on the expected numbers of children in these developments. Members were advised that there was a YEILDS process that is applied to determine the expected level of children which is built into schooling provision.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Support Elected Members and Officers in their work to support and challenge schools to improve standards of attainment and rates of progress for children in Peterborough Infant, Junior, Primary and Secondary schools.
3. Understand the current situation in Peterborough outlined in the Education Organisation Plan.



The Committee also requested that the Democratic Services Officer note the inclusion of the Portfolio Progress report of the Cabinet Member for Childrens Services, Education, Skills and the University on the work programme.

### 31. **FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which included the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions containing decisions that the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the plan and where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

- Members requested a briefing note on Forward Plan item Werrington Fields and Ken Stimpson Secondary School.

#### **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and **RESOLVED** to note the report.

The Committee also requested that the Director of Education provide the Committee with an update on the non-key item Werrington Fields and Ken Stimpson Secondary School, including the Section 77 response from the Department for Education.

### 32. **WORK PROGRAMME 2022-2023**

The Democratic Services Officer presented the report which looked at the work programme for the municipal year 2022/23 to determine the Committees priorities.

- Members requested that an item on Clare Lodge be considered and brought to the Committee.

#### **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the Work Programme for 2022/2023 and **RESOLVED** to note the report.

The Committee also requested that the Director of Education consider bringing a report to scrutiny focused on Clare Lodge.

### 33. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the Extraordinary Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees was noted as being 29 November 2022.

The date of the next Committee meeting was noted as being 12 January 2023

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CHAIR

Meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.57pm

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