

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 10.30 am on Thursday, 24 June 2021

Present:

Members: Councillor J Innes (Chair)
Councillor F Abbott
Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor S Keough
Councillor R Thay
Councillor C Thomas
Councillor A Tucker

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson and Kellie Jones

Other Members: Councillor K Sandhu, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Employees (by Directorate):

A Coles, Education and Skills
J Gregg, Director of Children
G Holmes, Law and Governance
C Sinclair, Law and Governance
R Sugars, Education and Skills

Apologies: Councillor R Simpson, Councillor P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interests

Councillor F Abbott declared an interest in the item regarding the Holiday Activity and Food Programme as she was a trustee of an organisation that had received funding for delivering the programme. As this was not a pecuniary interest she remained in the meeting for this item.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2021 were agreed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

3. Education and Children's Services

The Board received a wide-ranging presentation which detailed (a) the Children and Young People's Plan, (b) Covid-19: Children's Services and Education Service context and (c) the Holiday Activity and Food Programme. In order to give

due consideration to each matter, the Board considered each of the three areas separately.

(a) Children & Young People's Plan – Priorities

The Board noted that the draft Plan was a refresh of the 2020 Children and Young People Plan and had been developed through the following: understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, young people and families; understanding priority areas that need to continue from the 2020 plan and utilising the expertise of the agencies in the Children's Partnership.

The Plan had six priority areas: early help, mental health, health inequalities, education, training and employment, children with SEND and youth violence. The priorities, key issues and strategies were set out for each of those areas.

The Board considered the draft plan and questioned officers on a number of matters including:

- Sources of funding
- SEND – managing waiting lists
- Increase in youth violence and the importance of regular meetings of Members with local Police colleagues
- Plans for children not in education, employment or training (NEET)

The Board thanked Education and Children's Services staff for their excellent service in very difficult circumstances.

RESOLVED that the Board:

- 1. Note the refreshed draft Children and Young People's Plan.**
- 2. Agreed to add the following to the Work Programme:**
 - (a) Poverty, Health Inequalities and links to the Marmot Programme and the impact on children and families and educational attainment.**
 - (b) SEND, employment and post-16 opportunities**
 - (c) Criminal, sexual exploitation of children and Young People**
 - (d) Apprenticeships (with Scrutiny Board 3)**

(b) Children's Services – COVID-19 context on Services

The Board noted that Children's Services had continued to deliver protection, support and intervention to vulnerable families across Coventry, whilst maintaining critical services throughout the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Details of the critical elements of the service and ongoing protection and support of children were presented together with details of the impact on the workforce, performance, the current position and a detailed Children's Services Roadmap.

RESOLVED that the Board note the impact on Children's and Education Services and the continued work to support children and young people in the City.

(c) Coventry Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

The Board considered the HAF programme in terms of: the national context; HAF programme principals which had been agreed by the steering group (representatives across community/voluntary sector, public sector partners) for the Coventry programme; and a Summer offer of approximately 50k half-day sessions and meals delivered by approximately 40 organisations to deliver activities such as music, crafts, team games, drama, story time and more.

The organisations referred to above included community/voluntary and faith groups, Coventry Youth Partnership members, Cultural Education Partnership members, sports/leisure providers, after-school clubs, universities, food providers etc together with a wider range of organisations/groups providing information and advice to families.

The Board questioned officers on a number of matters including their concerns regarding the insufficient timeframe given to recruit staff for the programme and suggested that more notice should be given for future events to allow time for recruitment and preparation. Councillor Sandhu, in noting Members concerns, indicated that she would be writing to Government regarding future forward planning for the programme.

The Board also discussed organisational arrangements and arising from the discussion asked that they receive a list of organisations who had been successful together with information on the number who had been unsuccessful.

In summary it was noted that:

- Coventry was well positioned to deliver a creative HAF offer to Coventry children and young people in line with national HAF guidance.
- There was a key focus on capturing stories, case-studies photos and videos from the activities including a Coventry HAF video.
- In September 2021 there would be a focus on learning from the programme, with the aim of contributing to the case for extension and expansion of HAF nationally.
- The next phase of the programme would be the Christmas holidays 2021.

RESOLVED that the Board:

- 1. Note the presentation on the Holiday Activities and Food Programme.**
- 2. Agreed to receive a feedback report on the programme later in the municipal year.**

4. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues

The Scrutiny Board considered the Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year and agreed to add an item on 'Children withdrawn from School to be home-schooled'

RESOLVED that the Board note the Work Programme with the addition of the additional item referred to above and the items identified in Minute 3 above and which are summarised below:

- **Poverty, Health Inequalities and links to the Marmot Programme and the impact on children and families and educational attainment.**
- **SEND, employment and post-16 opportunities**
- **Criminal, sexual exploitation of children and Young People**
- **Apprenticeships (with Scrutiny Board 3)**
- **Report back on the Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF)**

5. Any Other Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.35 pm)