

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 6 July 2023

Present:

Members: Councillor CE Thomas (Chair)
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor S Keough
Councillor A Masih
Councillor S Nazir
Councillor E M Reeves
Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor A Tucker

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson and Mr G Vohra

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

Employees (by Directorate):

Chief Executives J Nugent (Chief Executive)

Children's Services K Nelson (Chief Partnerships Officer), S Bhambra, M Clayton, C Heeley, J Jones, N MacDonald, R Sugars, S Watson, A Whitrick

Education and Skills J Essex, G Smailes

Law and Governance G Holmes, U Patel, T Robinson

Apologies: Councillors T Khan and R Lancaster
Mr D Jackson (Co-Opted Member)
Councillors P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) and A Jobbar (Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Matters Arising

Further to Minute 33, Councillor J Blundell sought an update on Community Managed Libraries in Coventry. Officers assured the Board a briefing note would be circulated and the matter referred to a future meeting. With regards to Earlsdon Community Library, Councillor K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) informed the Board that the library's lease would be renewed and gave thanks to Councillors A Tucker and B Gittins. for their efforts in ensuring this.

Further to Minute 33, Councillor A Tucker sought an update on the recommendation regarding the asset transfer for Earlsdon Community Library with a proposed action for the Board to write to Councillor J O'Boyle (Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration, and Climate Change) and Councillor R Brown (Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources). It was agreed that the Chair would write to the Cabinet Members on behalf of the Board.

3. **Overview of Services - Education and Children's Social Care**

The Board considered a Briefing Note of the Chief Legal Officer and received a comprehensive presentation which provided an overview of services for Education and Children's Social Care.

The briefing note introduced a presentation on the service priorities of both Education and Children's Services, to support the Board in identifying work programme items for the municipal year 2023-24.

Members asked questions and were given responses in the following areas:

- Education and social care provision for children that need accommodation alongside an update on acute provision in the city.
- Funding for autism diagnosis and reducing diagnostic timescales.
- High in-year admissions pressures and the impact of migrant and refugee admissions on this.
- Statutory requirements on school attendance and service requirements – to be referred to the next meeting of Scrutiny Board 2.
- Performance figures in comparison to last year's in terms of child protection enquiries.
- Where FDAC (Family Drug and Alcohol Court) receive referrals from and what service they work within.
- How many children with an education and health care plan are awaiting a suitable placement – written answer to be provided.
- The average number of children per worker in 2023 with regards to case-load demands.

Councillor K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) thanked officers for the briefing note and gave her appreciation to officers for all their work in education and children's social care. She also recognised the generational issues facing education and children's social care.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board:

1. **Notes the content of the reports attached at Appendix 1 and 2.**

2. Notes that 'Statutory requirements for school attendance' will be referred to the next meeting of the Board
3. Notes that further information on Children with an education and health care plan awaiting a suitable placement will be circulated to the Board.
4. Agrees to the continuation of the Task and Finish Group on autism and identified the following members:
 - Councillor J Blundell
 - Councillor A Masih
 - Councillor E Reeves
 - Councillor CE Thomas

4. Apprenticeship Provision

The Board considered a briefing note of the Director of Business, Investment and Culture which updated the Board on the provision of apprenticeships in the city and provided an opportunity for Members to seek assurances on the continued delivery and accessibility of apprenticeships for young people in Coventry.

Specifically, the briefing note highlighted the apprenticeship landscape in Coventry including apprenticeship providers and issues surrounding apprenticeship training recruitment, Coventry City Council's work to support citywide apprenticeships, and the existing apprenticeship plan for Coventry College with training being transferred to the Warwickshire College Group (WCG).

Members asked questions and received responses on the following matters:

- Apprenticeship provision for those attending Coventry College and possible transport issues with the transfer of training to WCG.
- Tempering apprenticeship provision with adequate career advice from Coventry Council's partners.
- The overall profile of apprentices in the city, especially with regards to apprentices from refugee backgrounds – data to be gathered from the Migration Team.
- Rising travel fares impacting travel costs for apprentices – to be ascertained through liaison with citywide employers.
- Apprenticeship provision for City College following the Ofsted decision.
- Apprenticeship skills provision and social value commitments – written response to be provided.

Councillor K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) thanked officers for the briefing note and to Members for the questions raised. She also informed the Board of the skills audit currently taking place in local businesses across the city but recognised there was no quick fix solution to citywide apprenticeship provision.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board:

1. **Notes the content of the briefing note and Appendix A and B**
2. **Supports the work done by the Council to support the delivery of apprenticeships in Coventry**

5. **Work Programme**

The Board noted the work programme and agreed the inclusion of the items suggested from the All-Members Scrutiny Session (28 June 2023) below on the 2023/24 work programme.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board (2) notes the Work Programme and includes the following on the 2023/24 Work Programme:

- **NEETS (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) 16–19-Year-Olds**
- **Children Missing in Education**
- **Cost and Capacity of Children’s Homes**

6. **Any Other Business**

Further to Minutes 21, 26, and 32 from the 2022/23 Municipal Year, Councillor K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) provided an update on the letters previously sent to the Department for Education in relation to funding for schools. The received response provided a recognition that funding would eventually return to 2010 levels. Invitations sent to the Secretary of State for Education to visit Coventry to see the work taking place were turned down, but the Shadow Secretary of State for Education offered her intentions to visit in the future.

(Meeting closed at 11.50 am)