

# Bristol City Council Minutes of the People Scrutiny Commission

8 March 2021 at 2.00 pm



## **Members Present:-**

**Councillors:** Claire Hiscott (Chair), Celia Phipps (Vice-Chair), Eleanor Combley, Tim Kent, Gill Kirk, Brenda Massey, Ruth Pickersgill and Steve Smith

## **Also in Attendance:-**

Councillor Anna Keen, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills; Councillor Helen Godwin, Cabinet Member for Women, Families and Homes (Lead Member For Children's Services)

### **1. Welcome, Introduction and Safety Information**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

### **2. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Councillors English and Johnson sent apologies.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Phipps declared that she was the Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and that she was a Social Prescriber.

Councillor Kent declared that a member of his family had an Education Health Care Plan.

### **4. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14 December 2020 were agreed as a true record.

### **5. Chair's Business**

The Chair described the year as one of difficult challenging circumstances. All officers were thanked for their dedication and hard work.



The Chair provided thanks to the People Directorate Leadership Team; Jacqui Jensen, Executive Director; Ann James, Director of Children, Families and Safer Communities; Hugh Evans, Director of Adult Social Care; and Alison Hurley, Director for Education and Skills.

The Chair marked the departure of Jacqui Jensen from the Council at the end of this municipal year, and thanked her for her contribution to the Council over the years; that it was good to work with leaders such as her with integrity and strong commitment to Bristol's communities.

The Chair thanked the Democratic Services team, and the Scrutiny Advisors.

The Commission Members were thanked for their input this work programme.

Following the Temple Quarter school item which was brought to the previous meeting, and the associated public forum participation, it was agreed that Group leads, Cabinet Member and Director of Education and Skills should meet and further discuss the item. The Chair updated the Commission, that the meeting took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021, and it was a productive meeting which provided assurance of the provision of places for the next cohort; and an understanding of better communication with the Department for Education and parents. The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Officers for engagement and progress.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills highlighted the challenging time for young people receiving school placements and commended the officers in the admission team who had enabled places to be sent out on time.

The Chair updated Members on the recently formed Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel to provide a scrutiny provision for Adoption West, the Regional Adoption Agency. Councillor Johnson had represented Bristol City Council on the Joint Scrutiny Panel and had informed the first Annual Report which was scheduled to be agreed by the Panel on the 17 March. When the Annual Report was agreed it would be circulated to Members; and feedback, queries and comments were welcomed to influence and inform next year's work programme of the Joint Scrutiny Panel.

The Chair wished everyone a happy International Women's Day and highlighted how positive it was to see so many women present both on the Commission and in leadership roles.

Thanks and acknowledgement was also given to everyone who had been involved in education in Bristol, who help get the city through the difficult time; and for all the children on their return to school today.

## **RESOLVED;**

That an update to the Temple Quay school and provision be considered when next year's work programme is agreed.



That the Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel Annual Report be circulated to Commission Members and that Adoption West be considered when next year's work programme is agreed.

## 6. Public Forum

The following Public Forum submissions were noted;

### Questions

Ref	Name	Topic
Q 1 & 2	Jen Smith	Alternative Learning Provision and Special Educational Needs & Disability
Q 3 & 4	Lee Starr-Elliott	Special Educational Needs & Disability

### Statements

Ref	Name	Topic
S1	Jen Smith	Alternative Learning Provision
S2	Sid Smith	Alternative Learning Provision
S3	Sara Stocks	Special Educational Needs and Disability
S4	Kay Galpin	Alternative Learning Provision

Jen Smith and Sara Stock spoke to their statements.

Jen Smith, 1<sup>st</sup> supplementary question: How do you see solutions working?

The Director of Education & Skills advised that moving forward, all parties would sign up to shared objectives, which required shared set of behaviours which would contribute to an inclusive culture.



Jen Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> supplementary question: How many times has a barrister been used in 2020 and 2021 and what was the cost for this, not only for EHCP cases?

The Director of Education and Skills to provided a written response following the meeting;

- 2020 tribunal cases (when they were lodged with the LA) but the hearing may have taken place in 2020 or 2021 = 5 cases at a cost of £3330
- Out of the 5 cases, 2 were heard in totality in 2020, 1 was heard in part 2020 with the second part in 2021 and then 2 in 2021

Lee Starr-Elliott, supplementary question;

In my opinion there are issue with the questionnaire which means it is not accessible. How will you make it more accessible?

Director of Education and Skills:

Any feedback about accessibility will be reviewed and appropriate changes made so everyone could access the questionnaire.

One of the pieces of work has been the 'Time for Change' project, linked to the EHCP process, which ensures a child centred focus – professionals working around the views and experiences of that young person, which would mean the EHCP would be reflective of their views and experiences. This should see improvements of how EHCPs work for young people.

The Chair reinforced the importance to her for Alternative Learning Provision to be in the agenda today; and that it was proposed that Special Educational Needs and Disability would continue to be reviewed by scrutiny. Further improvements were expected and the Chair would not be content until further advances were seen.

## **RESOLVED;**

That Special Educational Needs and Disability provision be considered when next year's work programme is agreed;

That the Public Forum be noted.



## 7. COVID-19 Update (For Information)

The report was noted.

## 8. Performance Report Q3

The Executive Director of People introduced the report.

- It was agreed that clarification around Indicator BCPC248: Increase the number for hate crimes reported required clarification. The Commission was advised that this Performance Indicator was to measure increase in reporting, although further analysis was now needed to understand what that meant; and whether the increases in reporting correlated with increased incidents or not.
- There was a discussion with reference to Indicator BCPC270: Increase experience of work opportunities for priority groups, and Members requested clarification of terms used, including 'opportunities' and 'priority groups'. It was agreed that this information would be circulated following the meeting.
- The Commission was informed that there were plans in motion to address the lost work experience due to the pandemic; which included mentoring and how lost time could be made up in a meaningful way.
- Indicator BCPC266: Increase % of adults with learning difficulties known to social care, who are in paid employment was discussed, and Members raised an issue that no funding had been available to support groups led by people with learning difficulties provide input. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care advised the Commission that the Equalities Forum had been set up which had a wide-ranging representation of groups with disabilities including learning disabilities.
- Members discussed Indicator BCPB281: Average change in level of homecare following short term assessment and reablement episode, and were advised that there was an ambition to increase the amount of home care; that a culture change was required which would enable as much support at home as possible which could facilitate independence at home for as long as possible.
- With regard to Indicator DPEC018: Reduce the number of adolescents (aged 13-17) who need to enter care, the Commission was advised that there had been targeted support and interventions for families where teenagers were on the edge of care so as to try and prevent the need to enter care; this was a priority due to known poorer outcomes for older children who enter care. COVID-19



had prevented a lot of the intensive work with families in their homes (although not all) and there had been an increase in criminal exploitation of children during the pandemic. Therefore the COVID-19 effect had meant adolescence entering care was higher than the aim.

- There was a discussion around Indicator BCPC276a: Reduce the permanent admissions aged 65+ to residential and nursing care, per 100,000 population, and Members were advised that there had been a reduction of 94 people this quarter compared to the previous year; this despite the fact lots of beds had opened up in the system. The Commission was advised that the Indicator description was not clear, as it measured people in temporary placements instead of people who are permanently in beds, and so the Indicator would be reviewed.
- It was confirmed that because of reduced numbers the risk to the viability of care homes was detailed on the risk register.

## **RESOLVED;**

That the terms 'Opportunities' and 'Priority groups' within Indicator BCPC270 be clarified

### **9. Risk Report Q3**

The Report was noted.

### **10. Children In Care**

The Director of Children, Families and Safer Communities and the Service Manager and Deputy Manager's, Through Care Service presented the report.

Karen Black, Chief Executive, Off The Record, also spoke to the report.

- Members were advised that there had been a lot of work via the HOPE and schools across the city, particularly Cabot Learning federation to work with unaccompanied asylum seekers and to fund an enhanced pastoral support package for unaccompanied asylum seeker young people.
- There was a discussion around whether care leavers gain stable accommodation and the Commission was advised that the data showed that 93% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation, although the criteria for 'unsuitable' would be if the young person was sharing



without their own tenancy which meant all the 7% deemed in unsuitable accommodation may not all have been.

- The Commission was advised that lack of pastoral support in the past had meant care leavers had previously fallen out of accommodation, and some of the enhanced pastoral and welfare provision had addressed this and also enabled young people to stay in education and training. Members were advised that it was an issue that some of the unaccompanied asylum seekers could not work and so they had been encouraged to take voluntary roles which would help to build their CVs.
- The Commission heard that the Welcome Wednesday offer (which had expanded to also include Thursdays) provided a focus on CVs, and that this was part of the 'Triple Pathway Planning' – to include different options which may include if they were to get permanent status or they were to return home.
- Members heard the young people's MAPS (Mediation Assessment Prevention Support) was going from strength to strength, which helped young people navigate the housing pathway; and there had been creative planning to support young people live independently. There was a dedicated officer funded to support young people in the private rented sector.
- Off The record was thanked for the good work that it had done.
- There was a discussion about what support care leavers could receive post 25. The Commission heard that the Council had always tried to operate as flexibly as possible which included the ability to support some young people post 25, although there was not unlimited resource to do that; There was national discussions and research about this ongoing. It was important to ensure young people's networks are available to them.

## **11. Adult Social Care - Older people facing isolation**

The Head of Adult Care Commissioning introduced the report.

Kay Libby, Chief Executive Age UK Bristol; Carly Urbanski, Head of Bristol Ageing Better programme; and Judith Brown, Chair of Bristol Ageing Better Programme, also spoke to the report.

- The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care advised the Commission that this was a good example of co-production in action and it would shape how things would be done in the future.
- There was a discussion around the meaning of 'Age Friendly City'; and that it also meant 'People friendly city', as this would provide benefit to all.



- The Chair commended the work; that it was recognised it was not easy for organisations to plan and deliver services during the pandemic, and thanked all associated with the programme for all the good work to help keep older people connected.
- The Commission commended the report and the Bristol Ageing Better programme and stated that it was entirely behind the direction of travel.

## 12. Alternative Learning Provision

The Director of Education & Skills introduced the report. The Head of Service, Inclusive City and Virtual School Headteacher also spoke to the report.

- Members welcomed the fact that Alternative Learning Provision had been brought to the Scrutiny Commission.
- There was a discussion around the need to address poor outcomes for young people coming out of mainstream settings and the associated high social emotional mental health needs; members also discussed the need to mitigate inequalities in the system.
- The Commission was informed that the inclusion element in the pathway from mainstream had been addressed with a number of deep dives and individual case studies; the next step would be an analysis the detail which would be within Phase 2 of the transformation work.
- The Commission heard that there had been a positive session with Alternative Learning Provision Leaders across the city which provided a collaborative forum to share the commitment of better outcomes for young people. This would include reaching into mainstream settings to support young people rather than having a separation of mainstream and alternative provision settings.
- Members were advised that the high number identified with social emotional mental health issues was an issue which could be tackled by addressing the approach to inclusion in the city; that there should be a focus on learning needs rather than behaviour. This was in the process of being addressed via the Special Educational Needs and Disability Written Statement of Action, which included what provision was available and how early identification was achieved.
- Members thanked and commended Officers for the progress made to date.
- There was a discussion about how smaller provider organisations could be supported so as not to be excluded due to lack of capacity or skills to adhere to the service level agreements and quality assurance required with associated reports.



- Members were advised that there was a role for a variety of providers working with young people in different ways; that the report focused on the large providers, rather than the network of smaller youth organisations, but the point would be considered to ensure the smaller providers would not be negatively affected.
- The Alternative Learning Provision Hub was highlighted which had a focus to support smaller providers meet the criteria to be on the framework.
- Members were advised that the link between SEND unmet need and Alternative Learning Provision was a known challenge and the ongoing work would address this; and that Alternative Learning Provision should be short term and tailored within a specific space of time.
- There was a discussion about Hospital Education, and how children, once admitted could be brought back into mainstream; and how different schools may utilise alternative provision differently. Members were advised that Council would not have sight of all referrals or the services schools purchase; so one of the challenges was how could there be a city-wide view of what the purchase and use of provision looked like and how this fitted in with the Council's ambition of a culture of inclusion in mainstream settings.
- The Commission was advised that there was a range of services and needs across hospital education, so to look at how children were referred and which areas they had been taught in was complex. referred and what areas its complex. Hospital education took refusals seriously, and worked collaboratively with secondary schools, which had provided structures to help the Council influence and access information in this area.
- The Chair thanked all Officers associated with Hospital Education, who had gone above and beyond.

#### **RESOLVED;**

- That, following the publication of the independent report, Alternative Learning Provision be considered when next year's work programme is agreed.
- That the Belonging Strategy be considered when next year's work programme is agreed.

### **13. Value For Money Report (For Information)**

The report was noted.



## 14. Response to the People Scrutiny Working Group Report

The Executive Director for People introduced the report.

The People Directorate welcomed the report; that it was positive to have a focus on children and safeguarding.

- Members agreed that there had been a lot of positives that had come from new ways of working, which included sharing of information; and commended Officers for their commitment to move forward with improved practice rather than revert to previous ways of working.
- The Commission formally thanked and commended the Safeguarding Education team, who had been excellent, flexible and responsive.
- Members were advised that the improvements seen in sharing of information was to continue, and schools would find it easier to access relevant information in the future.
- The Commission was advised that the expected 5% increase in referrals to children's services would be funded within the existing budget and that there was reserves that could be drawn down if required.
- There was a discussion about the 'digital divide', and the distribution of devices from the Council, and Members were advised that distribution was ongoing coordinated by the Council's IT department. The Cabinet Member for Women, Families and Homes (Lead Member For Children's Services) advised that distribution had moved to a One City approach, with the Bristol Waste Council distribution as one part of this, with other work ongoing by partner organisations across the city, including the NHS. The need for hardware and data access would continue to be looked at, and provide longevity to the project city wide.
- The Chair said that the year had been tough for all, but a very positive one in terms of service delivery and scrutiny with a lot of constructive discussions and achievements; that it was clear that the Council had strengthened its partnerships throughout the city and there had been good creativity.
- The Chair thanked all Officers and pointed out as schools reopen and the ongoing recovery period would be challenging for all, and it was important for the Commission to keep its overview of the recovery strategy as it developed.

### RESOLVED;

- That the People Directorate accept all recommendations in the report.



- That Members be provided with how many devices and data packages had been provided to households so far;
- That the COVID-19 recovery strategy be considered when next year's work programme is agreed;

### **15. Action Tracker (For Information)**

The Action Tracker was noted.

### **16. Work Programme (For Information)**

The Work Programme was noted.

The Chair thanked all Commission Members for their input for this year's scrutiny work programme.

Meeting ended at 5.10 pm

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

