

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2021**

Councillor Burdess (in the Chair)

Councillors

D Coleman	B Mitchell	Owen	Stansfield
Critchley	M Mitchell	R Scott	

Ms Jo Snape, Diocesan Co-opted Member

In Attendance:

Councillor Maxine Callow, Scrutiny Leader Member

Councillor Gillian Campbell, Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Youth and Transience

Councillor Jim Hobson, Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Schools

Ms Lisa Arnold, Leisure Services Manager

Ms Vicki Gent, Director of Children's Services

Ms Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Services

Ms Jeanette Richards, Assistant Director of Children's Services

Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education, SEND and Early Years)

Mrs Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stansfield declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 9 'Catch-Up Premium Spend and Strategies' due to his position of employment at the Lotus School and agenda item 10 'Review of Youth Provision' due to his inclusion on the volunteer register for Streetlife.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 24 JUNE 2021

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the last meeting held on 24 June 2021 be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee noted that there were no applications to speak by members of the public on this occasion.

4 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER

The Committee gave consideration to the appointment of Ms Jo Snape as diocesan co-opted member for the Municipal Year 2021/2022 to replace Ms Helen Sage. Ms Snape introduced herself and provided a brief overview of her relevant experience in education.

The Committee agreed: To the appointment of Ms Jo Snape as diocesan co-opted member to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/2022.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2021**

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan, October 2021 to January 2022 relating to the portfolios of the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Schools and the Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Youth and Transience. Members noted that the Forward Plan contained one decision relevant to the Committee: 'To agree the Special Educational Needs strategy for the local area until 2026.' Councillor Hobson, Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Schools informed the Committee that the strategy had been delayed in its completion and the decision had therefore been deferred until January 2022.

6 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Committee noted that three Executive decisions had been taken within the remit of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee since the previous meeting.

The Committee asked questions in relation to EX41/2021 'Care Leaver Covenant,' seeking clarification over whether the previous covenant had been updated to include the Council's wholly owned companies or if additional amendments had also been included. Councillor Hobson, Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Schools advised that the Care Leaver Covenant was a new national offer which was being administered by the Department for Education and was an entirely new offer in addition to the previous covenant provided by the Council. Ms Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Services added that the new Care Leaver Covenant had been designed to enhance Blackpool's current Care Leaver offer as it would be a national initiative and therefore available to Blackpool care leavers living outside the town. Following approval, Ms McCartan advised that contact details of key partners had been shared with the covenant, who would gain signatories during Care Leavers' Week ahead of the launch which was to be planned for later in the year.

With regard to EX31/2021 'Blackpool Literacy Strategy,' the Committee requested a progress update. Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education, SEND and Early Years) reported that the Literacy Strategy had been launched at an event held at the Winter Gardens on 30 September 2021 and that the operational plan was currently being finalised. He informed the Committee that current funding to support the strategy would end in August 2022, consequently additional funding streams were being explored. Committee Members were invited to join a newly convened working group focusing on improving reading across the town, with Councillors Critchley and Stansfield volunteering to join the group. Mr Turner agreed to update the Committee further at its meeting on 27 January 2022 on the progress of the Literacy Strategy.

The Committee discussed the reduction in Literacy attainment levels as pupils transitioned from Key 2 to Key Stage 3, with Mr Turner acknowledging that a proportion of pupils' reading skills showed a marked reduction as they progressed through secondary school. He reported that transient pupils who joined a school part way through the school year often experienced lower levels of reading and literacy abilities. The Committee requested further information and more detailed data at a future meeting.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2021**

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive a further update on the Literacy Strategy at its meeting on 27 January 2022;
2. That Councillors Critchley and Stansfield join the working group on the reading strand of the Literacy Strategy and that Mr Turner would contact them with details of its next meeting;
3. To receive pupil literacy and reading performance data, focusing specifically on the reduction in attainment levels as pupils moved from KS2 to KS3 at its meeting in March 2022.

7 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT - CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING PILOT UPDATE

Ms Jeanette Richards, Assistant Director of Children's Services provided an update and initial results from the contextual safeguarding pilot which had been introduced in May 2021. Ms Richards informed the Committee that contextual safeguarding and 'missing from home' was an issue which required a multi-agency response in order to safeguard children and young people from the risks of harm posed from within the community and within varying contexts. She explained that many services and agencies, including the Awaken team, operated during daytime hours, when it had been identified that most activity involving young people was occurring at weekends and evenings. As a result and with the use of funding provided from Public Health, a new pilot initiative focussing on out of hours contextual safeguarding had been launched. The pilot included a visible presence in areas and locations of concern, engaging with young people and raising awareness within communities and within the night time economy. She highlighted that it was an innovative pilot, aimed at disrupting harmful behaviours and situations and which utilised a team out in the community to gain the trust of young people.

The Committee questioned whether the initiative had resulted in any cases of practices being driven underground in response to the efforts of the team. Ms Richards reported that no evidence of such had been identified but acknowledged that the nature of coercive relationships were hidden from the public eye and which was why the team had been placed in the community to help identify 'hot spot' areas of concern. Since the start of the pilot, Ms Richards reported, 25 outreach sessions had been held across the town and a strong zero tolerance message across the whole of Blackpool was being reiterated.

Funding around the initiative was discussed by the Committee, with Ms Richards informing Members that the Violence Reduction Unit had funded the pilot, with the hope that such funding would continue following the success of the trial.

In response to a question regarding outcomes for businesses that had been identified as 'hot spots', Ms Richards advised that establishments and individuals were closely mapped and monitored. She cited an example of a fast food venue whose CCTV footage had been seized and which was later served with a warning notice and Ms Richards highlighted that any breach of the warning notice would result in further follow-up activity.

The Committee was informed that the strength of partnership arrangements and the willingness to share necessary information had been beneficial, both locally and nationally, for example with the British Transport Police assisting in a number of

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2021**

situations which required their input.

In summarising, Ms Richards identified that an evaluation of the pilot had resulted in the decision to continue with the initiative and that in the event of funding not being available, the aim would be for the work to still continue using current staffing resources. The Committee supported this approach and gave recognition to the valuable and beneficial work undertaken by the initiative.

8 YOUTH JUSTICE TEAM INSPECTION

Ms Vicki Gent, Director of Children's Services updated the Committee on the progress of the Blackpool Youth Justice Service improvement journey and the outcome of its recent inspection. She informed the Committee that following Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Probation's (HMIP) unannounced inspection of Blackpool Youth Justice Service in October 2018 which had resulted in a rating of 'Inadequate', a re-inspection during May and June 2021 had acknowledged the improvements and the service had been rated as 'Good' and in three aspects 'Outstanding'. The Inspectorate had worked jointly with partner inspectors from policing, health, social care and education to undertake the inspection, with three broad areas having been examined: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service; the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts and the quality of out-of-court work.

Ms Gent outlined the six recommendations made by HMIP following the re-inspection:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to ensure they were meeting children's needs and reducing re-offending;
- Provide thorough and effective initial assessment of children's health and educational needs, including communication skills and dyslexia;
- Reduce the unacceptably high NEET (not in education, training or employment) rates for the over-16 caseload by getting more children into further education provision and vocational training, including access to services where children could gain the personal, life and social skills they needed to work towards employment;
- Ensure that, in all children's records, there is a plan to keep other people safe and contingency planning if issues in the child's life increase the likelihood of harmful behaviour;
- Where risk to the child's safety or wellbeing had been identified, put in place clear contingency planning for circumstances where the risk might increase;
- Where risk to other people had been identified, put in place clear contingency planning for circumstances where the risk might increase.

Ms Gent advised that the recommendations had been incorporated into the revised Youth Justice Improvement Plan, which would continue to be monitored by the service and bi-monthly via the Executive Board.

The Committee questioned whether Blackpool had sought examples of best practice from other Local Authorities, with Ms Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Services reporting that the service had made contact with a number of Local Authorities in order to learn from others and that examples of Blackpool's best practice had also been sought in

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2021**

return. She reiterated the service's commitment to reach 'Outstanding' and outlined the measures put in place to help achieve this, such as the holding of a Development Day in early 2022 to drive the improvement plan forward, as well as continuing oversight by the Executive Board.

The Committee commended the work of the Youth Justice Team and congratulated the service on its positive re-inspection outcome.

9 CATCH-UP PREMIUM SPEND AND STRATEGIES

Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education, SEND and Early Years) provided an overview of how Blackpool schools had spent their Catch-up/Recovery premium funding from the government. Mr Turner informed the Committee that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had been widespread and hugely challenging for schools and that the funding aimed to provide extra resources and capacity for schools to ensure that children were able to catch-up any lost learning. He reported that the Catch-up Premium had been provided by the Department for Education (DFE), with the total allocation amounting to £1 billion, divided into a pot of £650 million for the 2020/2021 academic year, to be allocated to schools for spending and £350 million for the National Tutoring Programme. All schools in Blackpool were eligible for the funding and most schools had received £80 per pupil, although the rate for special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRU) was £240. Schools were expected to publish the information about how they spent the premium on their websites. Mr Turner informed Members that there would be an additional recovery premium allocated for the school year 2021/2022, with the rates being £145 per pupil for mainstream schools and £290 per pupil for PRU and special schools.

Mr Turner confirmed that all schools had been able to access substantial sums via the funding opportunity, with even small schools being entitled to a minimum of £2,000 and larger schools considerably more. He suggested that Councillors who were school governors should utilise the opportunity to scrutinise school spend and hold school leaders to account for the quality of the provision and resources that were being put in place. Following consideration and further discussion, the Committee was of the opinion that only scrutinising the spend of schools where Councillors were governors would be an inconsistent approach as this would exclude the majority of academies. Members instead proposed that a deep dive review of the use of the Catch-up/Recovery premium funding should be undertaken which would include all Blackpool schools and academies, examining the information published by the schools and inviting representatives from all maintained schools to justify their use of the funding. Mr Turner agreed to provide a summary of the Catch-up/Recovery premium spending information published by schools to the Committee to inform the review.

The Committee discussed the merits of schools utilising the funding to focus on improving pupils' literacy skills and the necessity for evidence-based interventions to be encouraged as well as the important role played by literacy at home. In addition, further information regarding available funding for Early Years was requested from Mr Turner.

The Committee agreed:

1. To undertake a deep dive scrutiny of the use of Catch-up/Recovery premium

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2021**

- funding to include all Blackpool maintained schools and academies;
2. That further information regarding available funding for Early Years be provided to the Committee.

10 REVIEW OF YOUTH PROVISION

Ms Lisa Arnold, Head of Parks, Leisure and Catering Services and Ms Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Services provided an overview of the youth provision review currently being undertaken across Blackpool, which included details of the scope, purpose and anticipated timescales.

Ms Arnold summarised the key objectives of the review, informing the Committee that a thorough understanding of current provisions across the whole town was necessary in order to identify gaps and determine any areas currently unrepresented. Analysis of existing youth provision in Blackpool would be assessed via the following methods:

- Geographical mapping of youth provision across Blackpool;
- Quality of physical assets used by identified youth providers for youth provision;
- Level of engagement and provision;
- Comparison of engagement figures with comparable authorities/areas;
- Skills analysis of youth provision sector;
- Impact of current youth provision on the lives of young people in Blackpool through a social return on investment calculation.

Ms Arnold informed the Committee that engagement with young people and key stakeholders would be undertaken, with analysis of the findings from 1,000 surveys with young people to be completed in order to understand what services young people wanted. The review would include both those engaged and not engaged in youth provision; in-depth interviews through a minimum of ten focus groups with young people and focus groups to include targeted cohorts such as Our Children and Care Experienced Young People, Children not accessing mainstream education and targeted areas with a prevalence of Anti-Social Behaviour. In addition, findings from surveys, in-depth interviews and focus groups from key stakeholders would be reviewed, as well as the results from a minimum of 100 surveys completed by parents/carers of Blackpool children and young people. The Committee requested details of how Councillors could circulate the questionnaire to their constituents and young people, which Ms Arnold agreed to provide following the meeting.

Ms Arnold reported that representations from a range of organisations would inform the review and which included the Boathouse Youth, Boys and Girls Club, the Magic Club, Street Life and Blackpool Football Club Community Trust. The Committee questioned whether Scouts and Guides groups would be consulted, with Ms Arnold advising that the National Youth Agency (NYA), who had been appointed to undertake the review, would be reaching out to regional Scouts, Guides and Cadet organisations.

The Committee sought further information with regard to the funding of the review, with Ms Arnold reporting that the cost of the review would be £68,385 in total, with Blackpool Council contributing £38,385. She added that the NYA anticipated they could secure

MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2021

Department for Education funding for the remaining £30,000, which the NYA would self-fund in the interim.

The Committee requested that further information be brought back once the review had been undertaken, with Ms Arnold suggesting that the anticipated completion of the review would be early 2022, with the required reports and development plans to be produced in February 2022. She suggested that the Committee be consulted further for Member input into the draft report in January 2022.

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive further details of how to access the youth provision questionnaire following the meeting;
2. To consider the youth provision draft report once completed.

11 GL ASSESSMENT PUPIL ATTITUDE TO SELF AND SCHOOL (PASS) SURVEY OVERVIEW

Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education, SEND and Early Years) provided an overview of the findings of the GL Assessment Pupil Attitude to School and Self (PASS) surveys which had been undertaken by a cohort of Blackpool children in autumn 2020. Mr Turner explained that the PASS survey was designed to identify any barriers to learning by helping to understand pupil attitudes to learning and that the survey which had been conducted in the autumn term of the 2020/2021 school year showed a high satisfaction rate amongst Blackpool pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.

The Committee considered the resulting data, which showed results via year groups and also by school and region. Mr Turner reported that Blackpool pupils had performed better nationally with regard to reading scores during the pandemic which he suggested was as a result of the high quality of remote learning offered throughout the periods of school closures.

Members gave thanks to Mr Turner and his team for the encouraging results and requested that he pass the Committee's praise on to the Blackpool School Improvement Board. Mr Turner agreed to provide further data in 2022 from the autumn 2021 GL PASS surveys, once available.

The Committee agreed: To consider autumn 2021 GL PASS survey data once available.

12 INCLUSION IN EDUCATION SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATION MONITORING

Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education, SEND and Early Years) provided an annual progress update on the recommendations arising from the scrutiny review of Inclusion in Education. He reminded Members that the review had been undertaken as a result of the high levels of school exclusions and the Committee's assertion that improvements had been necessary. Mr Turner reported that a vast improvement had been seen in the number of referrals being made to the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), noting that a reduction in the number of admissions had resulted in the PRU's ability to better provide for each pupil's individual needs.

Mr Turner provided information on the new School Admissions Code, which he advised

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2021**

had been mandated by central government and should result in a speedier admissions system.

The Committee considered the action plan resulting from the review, reviewing Mr Turner's progress updates as included. In response to a question on recommendation R7 'To request that Academies consider the reintroduction of Council representation on their Local Governing Bodies in order to allow valuable input from elected Councillors and an additional link with the Local Authority,' Mr Turner advised that some Academies were reintroducing local governing committees, which would allow greater local representation and that Academy Chief Executives had informed Mr Turner that they were happy to include Councillor representatives on their governing bodies. He noted that any vacancies would be advertised and suggested that interested Councillors should apply when positions arose.

13 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members considered the Committee's Workplan for 2021/2022 and agreed the date of the Special Committee Meeting as Wednesday 12 January 2022.

The Committee agreed:

1. The Workplan for 2021/2022;
2. That a Special Committee Meeting be held on Wednesday 12 January 2022 at 5pm.

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Committee was noted as Thursday 9 December 2021, commencing at 6pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.45pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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