



Minutes

Name of meeting	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS
Date and Time	THURSDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2021 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs R Quigley (Chairman), D Adams, R Downer, S Ellis, S Hendry, K Lucioni and T Outlaw
Officers Present	Steve Crocker, Kathy Marriott, Brian Pope and Paul Thistlewood

11. Minutes

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021 subject to the deletion of Cllr Lucioni in the list of those in attendance and the inclusion of her name under apologies.

12. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Stephen Hendry declared an interest as he was co vice chairman at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School and had children in the school system.

13. Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum

There were no public questions submitted.

14. Children's Social Care Annual Complaints report

The Head of Information Governance and Business Support presented the annual complaints reports for 2019-20 and 2020-21, He explained the complaints process and the different stages a complaint could follow. It was important that learning outcomes were made from complaints to improve service delivery and reduce the number of future complaints. There had been five complaints dealt with by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, which was lower than other Local Authorities contained in the Statistical Neighbours data provided in the report.

The Committee were advised that the data collection and report writing had been a bit clunky and the item had been moved back on the agenda due to the election in

May 2021. It was understood that due to the type of work undertaken by Children's Service sometimes things were done wrong. It was important that lessons were learnt following such circumstances.

There had been no direct impact on complaints during Covid-19 however there had been more assessments undertaken with the Children's Social Care which therefore it may result in complaints.

It was acknowledged that the complainant was in control of the complaint through the process and they were able to escalate to higher stages if they believed it was necessary.

RESOLVED:

- a) The annual complaints report for 2019/20 and 2020/21 were received.
- b) The actions being taken on feedback from complainants and service users to aid service improvement were noted.
- c) The improved data base will be of value in the annual report for 2021-22 when assessing progress with areas of service delivery where complaints have been previously made.

15. **Planning for future school places**

The Head of Transport and Admissions explained the admissions process for both primary and secondary September intake and those applying for a place during the academic year. It was decided that parents would only be given the opportunity to name three preferred schools on the Island. The Admissions Code sets out deadlines for the admissions processes which were highlighted to the Committee, these included:

- Deadline for the completion of consultation on proposed admission arrangements,
- Application process opens for parents,
- National closing date for Secondary and Primary school applications
- National offer day for Secondary and Primary school places.

Admission Numbers were set in consultation with the schools and NHS data which assists with the intake to Primary school year Reception. Secondary school figures were based on the number of pupils at Primary schools with adjustments made to take account of year-on-year trends.

The Committee noted that there were some schools on the Island with Admission Numbers set as low as 15 or below and asked if the viability of some schools was being considered. It was advised that there were schools with low numbers however some of those schools succeeded in arranging the school structure and budget to ensure they were able to provide education for the children.

There had not been as much growth in school places being sought with new housing developments across the Island as new housing developments did not

bring new families to the island. There was more movement around the Island which caused children to move schools during a school year.

The Local Authority had a duty to provide sufficient school places, setting out admission arrangements. Academies must follow the same processes when setting admission numbers and had to consult with the Local Authority when setting or making changes to their admission numbers.

RESOLVED ;

The report provided an assurance on arrangements for school admissions, and forecasting the number of school places required in future years, for primary and secondary phases.

16. **Covid and Education recovery plan**

The Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion provided the Committee with a short presentation based on the most up to date guidance for schools following the summer break. Webinars had been arranged for schools to update and provide clarification.

All secondary school pupils should receive two on-site lateral flow tests prior to returning to school in the autumn and twice weekly home testing was then required until it was reviewed at the end of September. A Saliva testing programme run by Southampton University would be trialled at Medina House school and it was hoped more schools would follow this.

Schools would need to keep risk assessment documents up to date this would include:

- Communication with staff/visitors/students/parents to reinforce measures
- Consideration of staff/students who are clinically extremely vulnerable.
- Actions and procedures in event of outbreak in setting or within local community

Department for Education guidance for schools had changed and there was no longer a requirement for bubbles and social distancing, face coverings in school settings and under 18's identified as close contacts were not required to self-isolate unless they showed symptoms.

Public Health advice was still being provided and officers informed the Committee that the team had been extremely helpful at all times of the day with enquiries. Officers also complimented the Isle of Wight Council Communications department for their assistance with bulletins and information provided to parents.

Considering how children would attend school in the event of guardian needing to self-isolate, these were being looked at on an individual basis. Friends and family were asked first with the school offering alternative solutions if required.

The Committee were advised that every child was different. Some had excelled in their learning from home but others had struggled. It was noted that schools had remained open for vulnerable children who had benefitted from smaller class sizes. Staff were working hard to get children back on track with their education.

Both staff and children's mental health was being monitored and co-ordinators were working within schools to assist. Mental health workers were being sent out to schools to provide additional support.

There was some discussion regarding CO2 monitors and if government support was available for poorly ventilated schools. There was some conflicting advice regarding such monitors and it was believed opening windows was the best solution. The Committee asked that moving into the winter months schools heating bills may rise with windows being open. It was advised that during the pandemic schools had saved some money in their budgets which would cover these additional costs. It was noted that some school building projects had been put on hold during the pandemic so money allocated to projects was still available to the school.

RESOLVED:

- a) THAT The steps being taken regarding the prevention and control of Covid in schools were noted.
- b) THAT The Public Health team be praised for the work undertaken in supporting schools during the pandemic.

17. **Performance and Budget Update**

The Head of Strategy and Operations provided the Committee with a short presentation highlighting that demand remained high (approx. 20-30%) above normal which had been sustained for a six month period. Work was being put in place to ensure this would be resourced. It was noted that there had been a national issue in recruiting Social Workers with the 'Island' factor providing extra difficulty..

A visit by Ofsted had taken place in July 2021 for two weeks on Children in Need and Child Protection services., The formal outcome of that inspection was soon to be published however verbal feedback had been positive.

There had been a significant increase in the number of referrals for triage. Despite the increase, completion of Child and Family Assessments had been maintained within 45 days. A significant increase in children open to protection had been seen during the pandemic. This was believed to have been impacted as multi-agency services had not been able to deliver their services and therefore children had remained on the child protection plan to ensure regular visits. Adult mental health had also been a factor.

An outline was given of the Quality Assurance processes in place.

The Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion advised that this was the first time that education data had been included. The indicator on the Isle of Wight showed

that 98.2% of 16 and 17year olds leaving school went into further education, employment or training.

93.2% of Education and Health Care Plans were completed on time against the national average of 55%. OFSTED inspections had not been undertaken during the pandemic and therefore a number of schools that required improvement in past inspections had not received a follow up inspection. In cases where Ofsted had made monitoring visits to schools judged below good showed that effective action was being taken. Elective Home Education (EHE) had received positive feedback from families with 90% engaging with the EHE team. Key figures for exclusion and attendance was also provided.

RESOLVED:

- a) THAT The inclusion of data relating education and inclusion within the report be welcomed and continue in the future.
- b) THAT The situation regarding the number of electively home educated children be kept under review.
- c) THAT Trends in the number of permanent and fixed period exclusions be included in future reports.

18. **Committee's Work Plan**

There was some discussion regarding future items, specifically regarding school leavers and skills using apprenticeship schemes for more traditional trades.

RESOLVED:

- a) The following items be considered for inclusion within the workplan :-
 - i. Children's health
 - ii. Pathway into further education, employment and training.
 - iii. Formal outcome of the Ofsted July 2021 inspection on Children in Need and Child Protection Services.

19. **Members' Question Time**

Councillor Downer asked if OFSTED inspections had an impact on the preference requested by parents when applying for school places. He was advised that there was not much movement within schools following an OFSTED inspection and other factors such as age of the school buildings and headteacher were issues taken into account by parents.

CHAIRMAN