

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
 COMMITTEE
 15 OCTOBER 2021**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R J KENDRICK (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors W H Gray (Vice-Chairman), T A Carter, R J Cleaver, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews, N Sear, J Tyrrell, M A Whittington and G J Taylor.

Added Members

Parent Governor Representatives: Miss A E I Sayer.

Councillors: Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, (Executive Councillor Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement) R D Butroid (Executive Councillor People Management, Legal and Corporate Property) and S P Roe (Executive Support Councillor Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement) were also in attendance.

Officers in attendance:-

Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Sheridan Dodsworth (Head of SEND), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help), Carolyn Knight (Quality and Standards Manager), Eileen McMorrow (Programme Manager, Special Schools Strategy), Andrew Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager), Dave Pennington (Head of Property Development), Heather Sandy (Executive Director of Children's Services), and Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education).

The following officers attended the meeting remotely, via Teams:-

Linda Dennett (Assistant Director - Children's Health and Commissioning), Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding), Viki Thomas (Principal Advisor Early Education and Childcare) and Lindsay Tuach-Munford (Project Support Officer Transformation).

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S A J Blackburn, K H Cooke, The Reverend Philip Johnson (Church Representative) and Mrs M R Machin (Parent Governor Representative).

It was noted that the Chief Executive, having received notice under Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, had appointed Councillor G J Taylor to replace Councillor K H Cooke for this meeting only.

29 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

2

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No declarations of members' interest were made at this stage of the proceedings.

30 MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2021

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 September 2021 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR CHILDREN'S
SERVICES, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PROCUREMENT AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Chairman advised the Committee that he was planning to have a 10-minute break prior to Item 6 on the agenda.

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, Executive Councillor Children Services, Community Safety and Procurement, to provide any announcements to the Committee.

The Executive Councillor advised that Children's Services continued to be busy with planning the opening of special schools. The Executive Councillor advised further that she was a member of the Local Government Association Children's Board (which met four times a year). It was noted that the meetings were very informative and provided an opportunity for each council to see how they were performing post Covid-19; and to see how each council was dealing with the large number of unaccompanied asylum seekers. The Committee noted that the good news was that Lincolnshire was in-line with other colleagues from the East Midlands and was performing well.

Thanks were extended to officers for all their hard work post pandemic.

The Chairman invited Heather Sandy, Executive Director – Children's Services to advise the Committee of any announcements. The Executive Director – Children's Services advised the Committee that as part of the regional work, she had taken over the lead for the regional improvement and innovation work. The Committee was advised further that a £2.1 million bid had been won for the region, which would allow for some collaborative work to be done around different aspects of children's services.

It was noted that once work on the project had started to develop, a report would be presented to the Committee.

It was reported that the region had done so well in bringing in the extra funding; and that was testament to the work across the region to make sure that the bid was evidence based and that it could be demonstrated that it could be delivered.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended his congratulations to the region on their success and for the extra funding to help children's services.

32 UPDATE ON THE BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF SPECIALIST PROVISION; TOGETHER IN LINCOLNSHIRE STRATEGY

The Committee gave consideration to a report which set out the progress made in Year Three of the strategic implementation of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy.

The Chairman invited Eileen McMorrow, Programme Manager – Special School Strategy, and Dave Pennington, Head of Property Development, to present the item to the Committee. It was noted that Sheridan Dodsworth, Head of SEND, was in also attendance for this item.

The Committee was advised that the strategy would make significant changes to the existing special school education provision, creating an integrated and sustainable school system where pupils would be able to attend their nearest school, confident that their education and health needs would be fully met.

It was reported that the Building Schools of Specialist Provision Strategy had commenced implementation in 2019 and that it was a five-year strategy with the final all needs schools due to be ready to meet all needs in 2024.

The Committee was advised that implementation was well underway, but it was highlighted that at the moment, there were a number of factors that were making things difficult for the construction industry as well as the economy as a whole. It was highlighted that it was difficult to get material onto sites either from abroad or the UK. Details relating to supply chain issues were shown on pages 16 and 17 of the report in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.9.

It was highlighted that the Programme Team continued to monitor the risks associated with the volatility in the construction supply chain and that this was reported through governance structures on a monthly basis.

The Committee received an update on all the capital schemes. Progress made on each scheme was detailed in the report presented; and the update was complimented by a series of photographs depicting the progress being made on each of the sites.

In summary, the Committee was advised that:

- The Boston Endeavour Academy was now completed and had been handed over to the Community Inclusive Trust who had welcomed its first pupils on 6 September 2021;
- The Bourne Willoughby new block had been completed and had been handed over to the Priory Trust in readiness to welcome its first pupils in September 2021; and that remodelling aspects of the scheme had now started to parts of the original building. The Committee noted that this had been a modular build and was an example of

successful innovation with the supply chain working in a different way to give the best result. The modular build in this instance was the right construction for the tight site conditions, which made a traditional build difficult and expensive to deliver;

- Work at the Eresby School, Spilsby was now completed and had been handed over to the David Ross Education Trust, who had welcomed the return of pupils at the start of the September 2021 term; and that contractors were now on the remodelling of the original building. It was highlighted that this had also been a modular build;
- At Louth St Bernard's School, Phase 1 works to the residential block had been completed and had been handed over to the Lincolnshire Wolds Federation to reopen the facility; and that works continued on the main part of the scheme;
- At Lincoln St Christopher's School, the Committee noted that planning permission had been granted for both the new primary school building and expansion to the existing site to become secondary provision. It was noted that construction of the primary school was due to commence in the autumn 2021;
- Planning permission had been granted for the Priory scheme. It was noted that enabling works had been completed over the summer holidays; and that the project was due to be completed for August 2022. It was reported that works to the Garth site were now completed and that existing pupils were now benefitting from the improved accommodation;
- Works to the Ambergate site were now completed and that pupils were enjoying the much improved facilities. It was noted that works on the new hydrotherapy pool were still at the development stage and that a planning application had been submitted for the pool at the Sandon school site;
- The scheme at Horncastle St Lawrence had been placed on hold whilst a range of design options were considered. It was reported that a proposal to rebuild the school on the existing site had been identified as the preferred option and that a feasibility and design process were due to commence in autumn 2021;
- The Lincoln St Francis Special school had been put on hold whilst the future of the residential wing was determined; and
- No works had been undertaken at Gosberton Academy so far. It was planned to begin engagement in the autumn of 2021 in preparation for the feasibility and design process.

The Committee was advised that progress had been made with the supporting systems to ensure that children and young people with SEND received the very best education they could in the new buildings. It was highlighted that significant progress had been made with the special school reorganisation policy, which would ensure that all schools received fair and equitable funding to be able to deliver special education provision.

It was highlighted that a work force development work stream had designed the SEND Learning Platform, a sector-led training model for professional development, which would ensure that all pupils with SEND could access a quality education, facilitated by skilled and knowledgeable staff. It was noted that this was currently at the procurement stage and was set to be launched in the spring 2022.

It was reported that the health offer enabled Children with SEND to receive the health care needs from visiting professionals within the school setting, as each school had dedicated medical and physiotherapy space.

It was also highlighted that all special schools had signed up to the specialist equipment contract, which offered value for money for accessing specialist equipment; and that the prototype of the specialist community led panel had been launched in July 2021 at the Boston and South Holland locality. So far the panel had reviewed the case of two young people who were at risk of being placed in an independent non-maintained special school; if a local special school could not be found. Both cases had been resolved by the panel, with a successful outcome, with the pupils being educated at their local special school. It was noted that there would be a phased roll-out of the panels across all localities.

During consideration of the report, the Committee raised the following comments:

- Further information was sought with regard to building methodology for the modular buildings; and whether there was to be any residential provision at any of the sites. The Committee was advised that the modules were made in the UK and that the whole unit was then delivered to the site. A question was asked whether modular units would continue to be used for other projects. The Committee was advised that each project was assessed on its merit, as each site was unique and had its own challenges; and as a result the right solution was achieved for each site. It was noted that some units needed brickwork underneath the units, but others came with cladding that looked like brickwork. Confirmation was given that there was no residential provision on site, however, at the Louth St Bernard's site there would be provision for short breaks for families. Confirmation was also given that each site had new robust Harris fencing installed and that all schools had CCTV;
- Clarity was sought as to who was responsible for the newly constructed/upgraded buildings once they were completed. The Committee was advised that some were maintained schools and some were academy trust schools. With the maintained schools, the council had a statutory duty to maintain the buildings and where the works had been carried out within an academy trust, they would take the sole responsibility for the condition of the school. The Committee noted that with all the new build facilities, they had a 60 year lifespan and would not require much intervention at all. It was highlighted that the buildings being upgraded were built in the 1960's and were no longer fit for purpose, with very narrow corridors, limited usable internal space and little outside space. A further question posed was whether the strategies in the capital build would support the changing practices in the special educational needs environment. The Committee was advised that the Council had responsibility for ensuring enough places for children and that the demand for special school places had outstripped the current provision. It was noted that there was a really clear system through central government of how the Council funded the expansion of mainstream schools, but not specialist provision and how extra facilities would be added. It was highlighted that the same systems were not in place for children with SEND. It was noted that some movement had been seen from central government with regard to this issue;

- Further information was sought regarding the earlier free school application. It was reported that the free school application submitted had not been successful. Some feedback had been received from the Department for Education which was that the Council was already investing quite significantly in its schools already;
- One member questioned as to how many pupils had now changed schools, to now attend their nearest school to their home. Unfortunately, officers were unable to provide an exact figure at the meeting but advised that this information would be ascertained. It was highlighted that there had been some positive feedback from parents who were now able to access schools closer to home;
- Whether the St Francis School was going to continue being the designated profound and multiple learning centre. Confirmation was given that the St Francis School would cater for all needs in the same way as all of the special schools, so that provision would be equitable across the County;
- Whether the pressures to the construction industry would result in extra cost pressures, and whether there were sufficient contingencies in the budget to cover these. The Committee was advised that the project had kept to the timeline; and confirmation was given that there might be further costs incurred that were not covered in the original budget, but at the moment this was unknown. Reassurance was given that the situation was being monitored very carefully; and that every step was being taken to manage within budget. The Committee noted that the business case for the programme was very strong, particular reference was made to the cost savings from placing children in Lincolnshire and not out of county; and
- How many children would benefit from the capital programme and whether there had been future proofing built in to the programme. It was reported that an additional 527 places would be created. The 527 figure had been based on five year projections, with a 10% flexibility built in; therefore, officers were comfortable with the potential future capacity for special schools. It was noted that there was currently just over 2,000 children who attended special schools. The Committee was reminded that there were some young people who were in a special school for a period, who often could be ready to go back into mainstream schools. Part of the transformation and capital programme was that where young people were ready to go back to mainstream education, they would be supported to do so with workforce development.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended congratulations to all officers involved in the capital programme.

RESOLVED

1. That the progress made in Year 3 of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Together in Lincolnshire Strategy be received and that the comments made by the Committee be noted.
2. That a further update on Year 4 of implementation be received in October 2022.

(NOTE: The Committee adjourned for a short break at 10.47am and resumed at 11.06am).

33 CORPORATE PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Consideration was given to a report from Andy Morris, Corporate Parenting Manager, which outlined what the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities were and how good corporate parenting could greatly improve the lives and outcomes for young people.

Attached at Appendix A to the report was a copy of the Department for Education guidance document for local authorities entitled 'Applying Corporate Parenting Principles to Looked-After Children and Care Leavers' for the Committee's consideration.

The Chairman invited the Corporate Parenting Manager to present the report and provide the Committee with a presentation.

The presentation referred to:

- The definition of a corporate parent as defined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017;
- The seven legal principles as defined in the Act which define the corporate parenting role;
- The number of young children in care;
- The Council's approach shown to children in care and the aspirations for them;
- Placements;
- Who are care leavers;
- The national position;
- The local position; and
- What more could be done by the Council to meet the needs of its young people.

During consideration of the report and the presentation the Committee raised the following comments: -

- The Committee extended its thanks to the Corporate Parenting Manager for a very passionate and comprehensive presentation;
- The need to ensure that all members of the Council were aware of their corporate parenting role; and to help them understand their role a Corporate Parenting training session had been arranged for 5 November 2021; and that all members should be encouraged to attend the training;
- Whether there was any data relating to care leavers over the age of 25. The Committee was advised that some of the care leavers continued to maintain contact with their children's home or foster home; and some examples were provided to the Committee. The Committee noted that data was only available up to the age of 25 as the young people were left to enjoy their lives; but again, it was highlighted some care leavers still kept in contact with staff for that family support network;

- Whether Children's Services had looked to implement good practice from other councils. The Committee noted that the young people were engaged in all sorts of activities; and that this work was led by the Participation Team;
- How the North Somerset offer as detailed on page 101 compared to the Lincolnshire offer. The Committee noted that in Lincolnshire there was Council Tax relief (up to the age of 21) for all care leavers across all seven district councils and that most district councils were moving the age range to 25. It was reported that every young person received a new homes grant of £2,000, which they could access. Also, if a young person had a baby, they would also get an extra £500 to help them get set up, which was then matched by the district council in the area they lived. The Council would also pay for things like clothes for interviews and provide help to them if they needed it;
- District councils should be encouraged to help young people get free access to resources and facilities in their areas;
- That all a report should be brought to the Committee explaining the role of a corporate parent; and how the Council responds to the seven principles and identify where there were any gaps in provision;
- A suggestion was made to for the introduction of corporate parenting ambassadors for every scrutiny committee, who then linked into Children's Services;
- The importance of having a home and what the young people and care leavers would class as their home;
- The sensitive managing of visiting members to children's homes;
- The opportunity for members to be involved in 'Big Conversation' events when restrictions allowed; and
- The caring support offered by Baranardo's to care leavers and anyone involved in helping care leavers.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended his thanks to the Corporate Parenting Manager for his excellent report and presentation.

RESOLVED

That the report and presentation on Corporate Parenting Responsibilities be received; and that the comments raised by the Committee be noted.

Alex Sayer (Parent Governor Representative) left the meeting at 11.55am; and Councillor S P Roe (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement) left the meeting at 11.57am.

34 CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL STATUTORY COMPLAINTS REPORT 2020-21

Consideration was given to a report, which provided information concerning complaints relating to Children's Social Care in line with statutory requirements. It was noted that the report did not contain any data relating to complaints about the wider Children's Services area.

The Chairman invited Carolyn Knight, Head of Service – Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker to present the item to the Committee.

Appendix A to the report provided the Committee with information on the number of complaints received by Children's Social Care for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. It was highlighted that a total of 136 contacts had been received in 2020/21 from individuals wishing to complain about the service. With the implementation of a more restorative approach to complaints, 45 complaints had been resolved informally, outside of the complaints process, which accounted for 33% of all contacts received.

It was highlighted that for 2020/21 there had been an overall decrease in the number of complaints entering the formal process of 18%. It was highlighted further that a total of 91 complaints had formally entered the system; and that this was the lowest number of complaints received in the last 10 years, which was excellent news, especially in a year where services had adapted to manage Covid-19, which could have potentially seen an increase in customer dissatisfaction.

The Committee was advised that only 10 complaints had been fully upheld, four of these had been the result of a lack of communication, four had been due to staff conduct and attitude; and two had been as a result to a delay in service. It was also highlighted that 18 complaints had been partially upheld: eight due to a delay in service; seven due to assessment errors; and three due to the lack of communication. The Committee was advised that any learning from the complaints had been addressed by managers with the staff concerned.

Overall, it was highlighted that the process of early resolution was appearing to be making a difference in reducing the number of complaints that entered the formal system; and it was hoped that this would be maintained.

During consideration of the report, the Committee raised the following comments: -

- A request was made for further clarity around the graphs and the higher number of complaints received in Lincoln. The Committee noted that there were three areas with higher number of complaints, they were Lincoln and two of the East Lindsey teams. Reassurance was given that team managers reviewed all the complaints received to see what could be learnt from them. It was noted that for some of the East Lindsey complaints there had been some issues with children moving over the borders, as there had been a change in the way Lincolnshire managed cases compared to north and north east Lincolnshire;
- One member agreed that early resolution was a good thing to do but, actually should those contacted for early resolution still be classed as complaints; as someone had felt aggrieved enough in the first place to make contact;
- Further background information was sought relating to the two cases that had been referred to the Local Government and Social Ombudsman where fault had been found (page 130 paragraph 8 of the report pack). The Committee noted that one related to an age assessment for an unaccompanied asylum seeker, that the Council

had not applied the correct procedures; and the other was failing to provide suitable full-time education, which was then resolved;

- Better explanation of acronyms; and
- The need to ensure that compliments were recorded. Officers confirmed that compliments were received, and that these needed to be recorded better and included in future reports.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended his thanks to the Head of Service – Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker for the presentation.

RESOLVED

1. That the Children's Services Annual Statutory Complaints Report 2021/21 be received; and that the low number of complaints that were upheld or partially upheld be noted.
2. That the comments raised by the Committee during discussion be received.

35 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report from Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, which invited members to consider and comment on the content of its work programme, to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of greatest benefit.

The Committee was advised of the following amendments to the November agenda:

- The pre-decision scrutiny item on the expansion of St Lawrence School, Horncastle, had been deferred to the meeting on 14 January 2022 to allow for further work on the scheme;
- The Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Update had been removed from the agenda and the next update from the LSCP would now be on 22 April 2022; and
- There were two additional pre-decision scrutiny items in relation to the Spalding Academy Basic Need project and the Stamford Welland Academy Basic Need Project, prior to a decision by the Executive Councillor for People Management, Legal and Corporate Property between 22 and 30 November 2021.

One suggestion put forward for consideration at a future meeting was the independent report by Chris Witty, Chief Medical Officer on the health and wellbeing of England's coastal communities and how this impacted Children's Services.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be agreed subject to the inclusion of the amendments/suggestion mentioned above.

The meeting closed at 12.21 pm