

ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 12 JULY 2023

Present: Councillors Mpofu-Coles (Chair); Gavin (Vice-Chair), Cresswell, Davies, Edwards, Gittings, Hoskin, Keane, McEwan, O'Connell, Robinson and Woodward

Apologies: Councillors Ballsdon

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- Health and Wellbeing Board - 20 January 2023
- Health and Wellbeing Board - 17 March 2023
- Health and Wellbeing Board - 23 June 2023

3. NEW DIRECTIONS - ANNUAL UPDATE

The Principal and Adult Learning & Skills Manager for New Directions submitted a report that set out the key activities and outcomes delivered by New Directions College, the Council's Adult and Community Education service, covering the period between January 2022 and June 2023.

The report provided an update on the work of the college and highlighted the college's core service offer, funding arrangements, key performance and achievement figures, emerging developments, wider community and business partnerships, as well as learner feedback and satisfaction survey results.

The Committee heard that the current overall achievement rate for government funded education and skills at New Directions College was 91.4% for 2021-22, which was 2.6% above the last known national average rate of (88.8% in 2020) and marked an 18% improvement since 2018 when the overall achievement rate at the college had been 73.4%.

In March 2023 the college had established a new Governance Board consisting of the Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health, the Assistant Director for Culture and Assistant Director for Housing and Neighbourhood Services, two external representatives from the further education sector, the Council's Public Health Consultant, and BfC's Director of Education. The Governance Board, whilst not a mandatory requirement, would meet three times a year and help to drive service delivery. The Committee also heard that the college, along with leisure and culture services in Reading, was formally recognised by the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) and awarded winner of the Diversity and Inclusion category at the LGC Awards event held in June 2023.

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Whilst discussing the content of the report the Committee asked whether any data had been gathered that monitored the employability prospects of students in the long term. Andrea Wood advised that the Department for Education did not require the colleges to collect this type of information, but that destination data had been gathered for students and could be circulated to the Committee for assurance.

The Committee thanked Andrea Wood for the report and congratulated the team at New Directions College for their hard work.

Resolved –

- (1) That the New Directions Annual Update report be noted.**
- (2) That student destination data be circulated to members of the Committee and be included in any future annual reports.**

4. ALL AGE UNPAID CARERS STRATEGY FOR READING

The Interim Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Health submitted a report on the development of a Joint All Ages Unpaid Carers Strategy. The report explained that Reading's established Carers' Steering Group - a partnership between Reading Borough Council, voluntary sector partners, health partners and unpaid carers themselves - had identified the need for a Reading specific strategy to be created to bring services together, with the voice of unpaid carers at its heart.

The specific areas identified by the Carer's Steering Group as needing improvement reflected challenges known to be faced by unpaid carers nationally. Such challenges included:

- Barriers around recognising unpaid care and the role itself, many do not consider themselves as carers despite providing unpaid care for many reasons;
- Knowing what support you are entitled to and how to access it;
- Difficulties in navigating the health and social care system as an unpaid carer;
- Having your voice heard as an unpaid carer; and
- Difficulty in understanding the needs of unpaid carers as a result of misidentification or lack of identification of carers across the system.

The Carers' Steering Group had commenced a needs assessment engagement exercise that included consulting with unpaid carers and key partners. The needs assessment exercise had been launched to coincide with Carers' Week and would run between 5 June 2023 and 31 July 2023. During the consultation period there would be one survey for carers over the age of 18 and another survey for young carers. Different methods of engagement would be used throughout the consultation period to ensure that views had been captured from as wide range of carers as possible.

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The responses and input obtained from the needs assessment exercise would be analysed and used to develop a Joint All Ages Unpaid Carers Strategy for Reading. The Strategy would be owned Reading Borough Council, Brighter Futures for Children, health partners, voluntary sector organisations and unpaid carers themselves. A period of codesign would take place following which a finalised version of the Strategy would be submitted to the Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education Committee for approval.

Resolved –

- (1) That the development of an All Age Unpaid Carer's Strategy for Reading in conjunction with key partners be approved.**
- (2) That the planned consultation with carers to codesign and develop an All Age Unpaid Carer's Strategy for Reading be approved.**

5. ADULT SOCIAL CARE STRATEGY

The Interim Executive Director for Adult Social Care & Health submitted a report on the progress made towards the development of Reading's Adult Social Care (ASC) Strategy. The report sought permission to proceed with the next phase of stakeholder engagement and subsequent co-design with residents as part of a broader Adult Social Care Conversation.

The report detailed the milestones achieved to date to identify the initial priorities and vision for the Strategy. The report also included detail on the planned process of co-production, explained its alignment with preparations for Care Quality Commission Assurance, and listed the opportunities that would be gained by adopting a collaborative approach.

The report sought permission from the Committee to proceed with the engagement and consultation phase of the Strategy's development. The report explained that insights gained from the workshops that had been conducted to date would serve as a foundation for further engagement sessions, with any additional feedback being used to inform the draft Strategy and consultation process. A summary of the results from the Adult Social Care Vision and Priorities Workshop meetings held to date was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report set out the following Next Steps involved with the development of the Strategy:

- a. Planning and Scheduling: A comprehensive plan would be developed, outlining the timeline, methods, and target audiences for the engagement and consultation phases;
- b. Testing Vision & Priorities and Draft Strategy Distribution: The draft Adult Social Care Strategy, including the identified priorities and vision, would be shared with stakeholders, community organisations, people who use Adult Social Care services, carers, and other relevant parties for their input;
- c. Feedback Collection and Analysis: A structured process would be implemented to collect and analyse feedback and suggestions received from

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- stakeholders, enabling us to capture their valuable insights. This feedback would inform the draft and final strategy;
- d. Strategy Refinement: Insights and recommendations gathered would be carefully reviewed and considered to refine and shape the ASC strategy; and
 - e. Finalising the strategy: The strategy would be updated based on the feedback and prepared for the next stages of implementation and approval.

The report explained that the development of Reading's ASC Strategy through coproduction formed a fundamental aspect of the Council's commitment to provide person-centred care. By aligning the Strategy with the CQC assurance framework, the Council aimed to ensure that its services would meet the highest standards of quality and safety. It was anticipated that the coproduction process and subsequent consultation phase would lead to improved service delivery, stronger partnerships, and positive outcomes for the residents of Reading.

The report explained that, once permission had been granted, work would commence to plan and schedule engagement sessions and the consultation phase. This would include distributing draft vision statements and priorities of the Strategy, engaging with stakeholders and community organisations, and collecting feedback from people who used Adult Social Care services, carers, and other relevant parties. The consultation phase would be followed by the writeup and sharing of a draft Strategy. The insights gathered from these engagement sessions along with the consultation process would play a vital role in refining and shaping the final version of the strategy. The report included an estimated timetable the development of the Strategy through until December 2023.

Resolved –

- (1) That the plans to develop Reading's Adult Social Care Strategy and the associated timescales be noted;**
- (2) That the request to consult with Reading residents, including those who use Adult Social Care services, to gather insights and views to co-design the Strategy and its priorities be approved.**

6. CHILDREN WITH SEND ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY 2023-2025

The Director of Education, Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), submitted a report on the Children with SEND Accessibility Strategy 2023 to 2025. A copy of the Strategy was attached to the report at Appendix 1. The Strategy succeeded the previous Accessibility Strategy agreed by ACE Committee on 1 July 2021 (minute 5 refers). The report asked the Committee to approve the Children with SEND Accessibility Strategy 2023-2025, as attached at Appendix 1, which had been updated to reflect the further developed local offer and to recognise the adoption of the Reading Area SEND Strategy 2022-2027.

The Strategy set out how BFfC on behalf of Reading Borough Council would comply with the legal requirement to ensure equality of access to education for Reading children with disabilities. The Strategy detailed which parties were responsible for ensuring which provisions were in place and provided guidance to schools and educational providers on

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how they could seek support from BFfC in order to ensure that they were compliant. The Strategy set out the steps to be taken to ensure that pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) could fully participate in the education provided by their Reading community school and aimed to ensure that pupils with SEND could enjoy all other benefits, facilities and services that the school provided for its pupils. The Strategy looked to remove disability as a barrier to engagement for children by providing clear guidance to schools and educational providers regarding the law, and to give advice regarding what support was available to them from BFfC to help ensure that school environments were accessible to all children.

The Committee noted that the Accessibility Strategy only applied to community-maintained schools and did not apply to academies or free schools in the Borough who were responsible for developing their own strategies. The Director of Education confirmed that BFfC would work closely with all schools, including academies, to support and challenge them to meet the same standards as those set out in the Accessibility Strategy.

At the meeting the Committee asked to receive an annual update report on the implementation of the SEND Accessibility Strategy. The Director of Education advised that a report on the progress made towards the implementation of the wider Reading Area SEND Strategy was already being submitted on an annual basis to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Director of Education recommended that the annual report could also be submitted to the ACE Committee and could include a combined update on the implementation of the SEND Accessibility Strategy at the same time.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Children with SEND Accessibility Strategy 2023-2025, as attached at Appendix 1, be approved;**
- (2) That the ACE Committee receive an annual report providing update on the progress made towards the implementation of the wider Reading Area SEND Strategy as well as the SEND Accessibility Strategy.**

7. ANNUAL SCHOOL STANDARDS & ATTAINMENT

Brian Grady, The Director of Education, Brighter Futures for Children, submitted a report introducing The Annual School Standards and Attainment report for the 2021-2022 academic year. A copy of Brighter Futures for Children's Annual School Standards and Achievement Report 2021-2022 was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report set out how Brighter Futures for Children, on behalf of Reading Borough Council, supported statutory duties regarding education and school standards in support of the Council's strategic priorities and policies. The report used verified examination data and so related to the previous academic year (2021/22), not the current academic year (2022/23).

The report explained that schools had been implementing research informed approaches to improve standards, with most schools being judged positively by Ofsted and in findings

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from school effectiveness assurance activities. However, these actions had not closed gaps with national performance quickly enough.

The report explained that this was the first period for three years where attainment data had been published and that the data painted a picture of concern, with children clearly impacted from the loss of schooling during the period of the pandemic. Though this was a national issue, Reading seemed to have performed more poorly in headline measures at KS1 and KS2.

The report noted that the outcomes for Children Looked After and for bilingual children categorised as having English as an Additional Language had been stronger, with performance at or above national averages for these groups. This reflected the success of long-term work of the Virtual School and projects to support language and communication in schools.

The report explained that, overall, performance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils at risk of poor outcomes needed to be improved and the gaps reduced. Particular areas of concern included children with or who have ever had a social worker, who underperformed compared to their peers in most schools; and an analysis of outcomes by pupil ethnicity had identified that children with Black Caribbean Heritage were underperforming in Reading schools.

The Annual School Standards and Achievement Report 2021-2022 identified the priorities and key actions being taken in the current academic year. These were expanded on in the covering report which highlighted and were set out under the following priorities:

- Priority 1: Developing school-to school support and challenge through the Education Partnership Board;
- Priority 2: Promotion of positive wellbeing for school leaders and school staff;
- Priority 3: Targeting of intervention and support to raise standards and progress of pupils at schools with the poorest results, informed by an increasingly sophisticated understanding of inequalities outcomes for disadvantaged groups;
- Priority 4: Building governor capacity, skills and oversight to enhance support and challenge;
- Priority 5: Implementing a Borough-wide teaching staff recruitment and retention strategy.

The report explained that an annual report would be brought back to ACE Committee to track improvements in school standards and pupil attainment. Additional reports would also be submitted to the Committee focusing on key areas of priority action throughout the academic year.

Alice Boon, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness; Andrea O'Neill, Inclusion Leader at The Kennet Federation; Lisa Telling, Executive Headteacher of Katesgrove Primary School and Southcote Primary School; Simon Uttley, Headteacher of Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School; and Amanda Walcott-Barnett, Deputy Headteacher at E P Collier Primary

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School and Anti-Racist Lead Practitioner were present at the meeting for the item and addressed the Committee and answered questions on their experiences, work and roles as school leaders within the local school system.

Resolved –

- (1) That the position regarding school standards and attainment, as set out in the report attached at Appendix 1, be noted;**
- (2) That the priorities and current and planned activity to further improve attainment, with a focus on priority groups, be endorsed;**
- (3) That the Committee receive further reports in the forthcoming academic year on progress of actions and the impact on standards and attainment.**

(Councillor Cresswell declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item relating to his work in the alternative provision education sector)

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.23 pm)