
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2024

Present: Councillors Barnes-Andrews, Chapman, Cox, Lambert, Mrs Mintoff, Webb and P Baillie
Appointed Members:

Apologies: Councillors J Baillie
Appointed Members: Rob Sanders and Catherine Hobbs

24. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

Apologies from Mr Rob Saunders were noted. In addition, it was noted that following receipt of the temporary resignation of Councillor J Baillie from the Panel, the Monitoring Officer acting under delegated powers, had appointed Councillor P Baillie to replace them for the purposes of this meeting.

25. **ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE- CHAIR**

RESOLVED that Councillor Barnes-Andrews be elected as Chair and that Councillor Lambert be elected as Vice- Chair for 2024 for the remainder of the municipal year.

26. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

27. **FURTHER EDUCATION IN SOUTHAMPTON**

The Panel considered the report of the Scrutiny Manager recommending that the Panel discuss the issue of further education provision and performance in Southampton with representatives from Post 16 providers in the city, the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning, and invited officers.

Cllr Winning – Cabinet Member for Children and Learning, Andrew Kaye – Chief Executive, South Hampshire College Group, Alex Scott – Principal, Itchen 6th Form College, Angela Berry – Principal, Richard Taunton 6th Form College, Paul Overton - Head of 6th Form, Bitterne Park School, Jon Tucker – Assistant Headteacher, St Annes School, Claire Myers – Vice-Principal, Richard Taunton 6th Form College, and Derek Wiles – Divisional Head of Education and Learning at Southampton City Council were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

The Panel received a briefing from the leaders of the assembled education providers detailing appropriate contextual information for each college, and setting out the challenges for their colleges, and the common challenges in the provision of post 16 education in the City.

The colleges referenced their importance within the community and explained how they reached out to students, even those obtaining lower grades in their GCSEs, to ensure that comprehensive pathways to further education existed in Southampton.

It was explained that the number of students with special education needs being educated by the City's colleges had risen significantly and that the providers were able to support students to attain a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications.

It was explained that there had been a problem of perception regarding the quality of education provided by the education providers within the City. Colleges had however seen a growing number of children opting to study in Southampton, particularly from areas outside the city's eastern boundaries.

The extensive collaboration between providers was identified as a real strength of the sector in Southampton. However, it was noted that currently it was difficult to effectively measure the performance of the providers as the added value measurements were currently not available. Providers informed the Panel that, when value added performance is published, it would reflect positively on Southampton establishments and would help to address some of the negative perception currently associated with further education providers in the City.

RESOLVED that

1. That further education providers in the City consider working collaboratively to develop a strategy with the objective of attracting more Southampton students to remain in the City for post 16 study.
2. That, if further education in Southampton is considered by the Panel in 2024/25, the information published with the agenda includes appropriate measures of the colleges and school sixth forms respective performance.

28. **CHILDREN AND LEARNING - PERFORMANCE**

The Panel considered the report of the Scrutiny Manager recommending that the Panel consider and challenge the performance of Children's Services and Learning in Southampton.

Councillor Winning – Cabinet Member for Children and Learning and Rob Henderson - Executive Director, Children and Learning were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

The Panel discussed a number of points including:

- Numbers of Children Looked After (CLA) within the City. It was noted that this number continued to slowly reduce across the City. The Panel were informed that the systems to identify and resolve potential care issues at an earlier age had continued; and
- The number of CLA who had moved placement during the year. The Panel recognised the importance of placement stability and sought additional details on the reasons for placement moves and the resolutions achieved.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Panel are provided with statistics on the number of CLA who have had 1 and 2 placement moves during the year.

2. That analysis is undertaken, and attached to the 21 March agenda, of the cohort of CLA who have had 3 or more placements during the year. The analysis should include the number of children in the cohort who returned to their birth families.

29. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel received and noted the report of the Scrutiny Manager which enabling the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel to monitor and track progress on recommendations made at previous meetings.

30. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC - EXEMPT PAPERS INCLUDED IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM**

RESOLVED that in accordance with the Council's Constitution, specifically the Access to Information Procedure Rules contained within the Constitution, the press and public would be excluded from the meeting in respect of any consideration of the exempt appendix to the following Item

The appendix is considered to be exempt from general publication based on Category 3 of paragraph 10.4 of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules. It contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

31. **CHILDREN AND LEARNING - DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS**

The Panel considered the report and confidential appendix of the Executive Director - Children and Learning, outlining the service's budget position and the developing proposals to decrease pressures over the next three years, from 2024/25.

Cllr Winning – Cabinet Member for Children and Learning and Rob Henderson - Executive Director, Children & Learning, were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

The Panel discussed a number of points including:

- Efforts to reduce spend in the current financial year and manage the budget for future years;
- The conflict between the needs of those receiving support and rising costs and demand. The Panel noted that demand was difficult to forecast with much certainty;
- The potential to save money through the redesign of services from June 2024;
- Ongoing reductions in the numbers of agency staff through the establishment of a fixed permanent workforce and making Southampton an attractive place to work; and
- The Panel expressed concerns that the scale of the reductions required could jeopardise the improvements that had been to children's services in Southampton. The Panel committed to utilising the performance report and regular financial updates to scrutinise the delivery of the budget proposals and the impact on outcomes for children and young people in the City.