

Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 21 May 2020

(NOTE: This meeting was held as a remote meeting in accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.)

PRESENT: Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Mike Levery (Deputy Chair), Mike Chaplin, Julie Grocutt, Francyne Johnson, Alan Law, Joe Otten, Kevin Oxley, Colin Ross, Jim Steinke, Alison Teal, Sophie Wilson and Cliff Woodcraft

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Sam Evans, (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Alice Riddell (Healthwatch Sheffield – Observer).

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 In relation to Agenda Item 6 (Call-In of the Cabinet Decision on Investing in Young People), Sam Evans declared a personal interest as, until very recently, he was the Project Manager for Forge Youth, and continued to undertake work for the Charity, and indicated that he would not take part in any vote.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

4.1 Jane Peters asked the following question:-

I am writing to alert you to a gross injustice regarding your constituents and future voters.

Much has been made over many years of what a "problem" home education is, often tenuously associating it with lack of socialisation and poor outcomes, not to mention child abuse. There have been many hours of parliamentary, committee, and council time devoted to commissioning reports and campaigns around compulsory registration.

In addition to this, there are further costs associated with officers checking on the appropriateness of provision and progress of "known" home educators.

Here is how you can quickly and easily improve the situation in Sheffield.

For more than four years I have been requesting that Sheffield provides these students with access to examinations (functional skills, GCSEs, IGCSEs, A levels etc). This will provide the LEA with measurable results, aid future planning, improve college entries and career progression for these students and therefore also have a positive impact on benefits claims in the long term. It will also provide clarity for both families and EHE officers as to possible outcomes and encourage engagement.

From this summer there will be no exam centres/schools within a 40 mile radius (offering a good range of subjects) who are willing to accept private candidates (eg Home Educated Students).

This makes successful outcomes almost impossible. What is the point of checks, registration etc if students cannot access qualifications as proof of the standards they have reached?

Due to the lack of a local centre, costs are now spiralling - addition of travel costs, parking, accommodation etc. See the links below for some examples of exam fees from the nearest centres. Costs escalate further if you have SEN's and require access arrangements (eg extra time, room, scribe, computer use, reader etc) therefore one GCSE can cost £500-£1000. (This does not include tuition, books, resources etc)

<https://www.macclesfieldtutorialcollege.com/examination-fees/>
<https://www.tutorsandexams.uk/fees-list/>

Often, home educated students stagger exam entries, usually from Yr9 onwards, to manage costs but these prices are too high for many families and are not representative of the actual examination cost (usually around £50).

The cancelling of this summer's exams has meant the majority of home educating students will have had their entries through centres withdrawn, their education and progress will be halted and monies lost. This is despite initial government assurances to the contrary.

For November and next summer, it is likely that centres will have more entries than they can cope with. This may again, leave many students unable to take exams they have prepared for and unable to move on to college, university or work.

In Sheffield, you are responsible for an LEA with one of the highest rates of home education per head of population. It is likely there are enough home educated students to fill a large primary/small secondary school.

Where is the money going that would have been allocated for each of these students?

Is it really beyond the ability of the local authority to put in place a few rooms, desks, invigilators, a couple of times a year and provide the basic administration required for examinations or alternatively pay one or more schools/education providers to supply these services?

Again, where is the money going that would normally be allocated for the education of these students?

You are letting these students down, you are limiting their future choices. You are penalizing families who have provided their children with high quality education in line with the laws of this country. For many, home education is a positive and successful experience, but currently, within Sheffield, students are being actively prevented from completing their studies. Is this morally acceptable?

Are you allowing your focus on this subject to be drawn by salacious newspaper gossip? Or are you able to look at the facts and work towards a more positive model for home education?

May I ask you to seriously consider the consequences of the current, and on-going difficulties, ask questions and raise these issues with your colleagues, work with a sense of urgency towards a successful result - a place to take examinations in Sheffield for those not in school (this is an even larger group of students but includes home educators).

I look forward to your response and am happy to try to answer any further queries.

- 4.2 Councillor Abtislam Mohamed (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) stated that she would provide a detailed, written response to Ms Peters.

5. CALL-IN OF THE CABINET DECISION ON INVESTING IN YOUNG PEOPLE

- 5.1 The Committee considered the following decision of the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 18th March, 2020, regarding Investing in Young People:-

- (a) notes the findings of the Leader Review of Youth Services;
- (b) endorses and approves the ambitions and proposals set out in this report, to support and improve the lives of young people in Sheffield;
- (c) notes the concurrent decision made in the Council meeting of 4th March, 2020 to invest an additional £2m to further develop young people's services in 2020-21, and to identify additional mainstream funding through the Council's budget process in future years; and
- (d) agrees not to re-tender the current contract for Youth Services when it expires.

5.2 Signatories

The lead signatory to the call-in was Councillor Mike Levery, and the other signatories were Councillors Steve Ayris, Penny Baker, Tim Huggan and Cliff Woodcraft.

5.3 Reasons for the Call-in

The signatories wanted more details on the impact on young people and the financial viability of Sheffield Futures as a charity and equalities impact.

5.4 Attendees

- The Leader of the Council (Councillor Julie Dore)
- Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children and Families)
- Councillor Abtisam Mohamed (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills)
- Councillor Steve Ayris (signatory to the call-in)
- Councillor Penny Baker (signatory to the call-in)
- Councillor Tim Huggan (signatory to the call-in)
- Dawn Shaw (Director of Communities)

5.5 Councillor Mike Levery, as lead signatory, stated that the two main reasons for the call-in related to the background and process and financial implications of the decision. Councillor Levery provided a brief historic background regarding Sheffield Futures, indicating that it had been established in 1998, and had been contracted to deliver youth services, on behalf of the Council, since 2002, on a 50 year contract. The contract had been reviewed a number of times, resulting in the charity being contracted to the Council for approximately 20 years. Councillor Levery made reference to a report submitted to the Cabinet, in July 2018, on a review of young people's services, and which contained details of a number of possible delivery models. He stressed that at this stage, there was no reference to a preferred option. One of the recommendations was for the Council to review the service and to report back to the Cabinet by October, 2018 in a series of service delivery options but, to date, as far as he was aware, no such report had been submitted. Councillor Levery stated that it was his understanding that one of the recommendations set out in the report submitted to the Cabinet on 18th March, 2020, was not to re-tender the current contract for Youth Services when it expired, which, in simple terms, meant that the Council would not be renewing its contract with Sheffield Futures. He stated that, in his view, a decision had only been made to insource the services, unless there were good reasons not to do so, therefore, he believed that the decision to then look at alternatives did not make sense. He stressed that it was the Council's role to provide a "wrap around" service, whilst not expecting to deliver all the different services itself, particularly as a number were of a specialist nature. He believed therefore that such specialist services could not be delivered in-house. Councillor Levery believed that the findings of the review should have been considered by this Committee first. With regard the financial implications of the decision, he stated that charitable organisations, such as Sheffield Futures, were able to access grants in order to supplement their operating income, and raised concerns with regard to further potential costs of

insourcing, which included the costs associated with TUPE arrangements, the pension liability which Sheffield Futures currently held, and which would transfer back to the Council, the costs of transferring those staff who were currently on different pension schemes, back to the South Yorkshire Pension Scheme and a potential increase in salaries following the transfer of staff. In the light of these potential costs, he queried how much of the additional £2m funding would be used towards these.

- 5.6 Councillor Cliff Woodcraft stated that it was clear that no other options, other than insourcing, had been considered by the Council, including whether changes could have been made to the existing arrangements. He considered that such action had resulted in no consideration being given to a whole range of partnership, collaborative or outsourcing solutions, which could bring in expertise from a number of different areas. Councillor Woodcraft expressed concerns as to why such other options had not been explored, and considered that they should be in order to provide best value for money and provide the best services for young people in the City.
- 5.7 Councillor Steve Ayriss expressed similar concerns, raising a number of questions with regard to the financial implications of insourcing, as well as querying what would happen to the Sheffield Futures brand, which had become well recognised and well regarded.
- 5.8 Councillor Tim Huggan stated that there was no information in terms of how the transition would take place. He also made reference to comments made at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, as part of its review of the Council's governance arrangements, at which suggestions had been made that there could be a scope for such major decisions to be scrutinised prior to any decision being made. Councillor Huggan believed that there was a case for such pre-scrutiny in this regard, particularly given the major changes for the youth of the City.
- 5.9 The Leader (Councillor Julie Dore) stated that she was surprised at the decision to call the item in, on the basis that it involved £2m additional investment in services for young people. She made reference to various decisions over the last few years which had impacted adversely on services for young people, particularly during austerity, and therefore considered that the additional investment represented a positive step. She stated that the Council looked at every contract which was due to terminate and with regard to this particular contract, a decision had been made not to retender. The primary reason for this was that if the Council did retender, there was no guarantee that Sheffield Futures would be successful and, in fact, there was a possibility that the tender could be awarded to the private sector, resulting in a possible risk to young people's services in future. The reasons as to why the Council wished to invest an additional £2m funding, as well as why it wished to integrate the service, were clearly set out in the report. It was also clear in the report how it was envisaged that all the different services would be arranged, in that not all services would be insourced as a number of specialist services were likely to continue to be delivered by third parties. Councillor Dore stressed that it was not the responsibility of the Council to safeguard the financial position of contractors.

- 5.10 Councillor Jackie Drayton stated that the recommendations in the report submitted to the Cabinet in 2018 stated clearly that bringing the services in-house was one possible suggestion, and this issue had been referred to this Scrutiny Committee at the time and, at which stage, no Members indicated that this should not be an option. Councillor Drayton stated that there were advantages and disadvantages to delivering services in-house and externally. She stressed that the review, as requested at the meeting of the Cabinet in 2018, had taken so long as it had been so complex, including a number of different services for young people. Councillor Drayton stated that due to austerity, the funding used towards delivering services for young people in the city took the form of an area based grant but over the years, there had been around a £13m reduction in funding for the Council to deliver such services.
- 5.11 Councillor Abtisam Mohamed stated that the additional £2m funding would enable the Council to deliver a more holistic service for young people in the City, and therefore represented a positive step.
- 5.12 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-
- It was accepted that Sheffield Futures were a strategic partner of the Council, just by the numerous other partners who worked on behalf of the Council. The Council would continue to work with, and support, Sheffield Futures. When the contract was remodelled, there was the possibility that certain services could be recommissioned to Sheffield Futures. The only decision taken at this stage was not to retender, which the Council would be forced to do under European legislation, on the basis that there was no guarantee that Sheffield Futures would have been successful in the tendering process.
 - Historically, services for young people in Sheffield had been delivered by third party organisations, with the funding allocated directly to the Council being used only for the most vulnerable. There was an expectation that third party organisations would, with the help and support of the Council, bid for additional funding/grants. It was expected that Sheffield Futures would continue to do this.
 - The Council would use the additional funding to look at an appropriate model of delivery, for the benefit of every young person in the City. This work would include the undertaking of a detailed cost benefit analysis.
 - Whilst it was accepted that there could be on-costs associated with insourcing contracts, the £2m additional funding would be allocated solely to the delivery of services for young people. Details as regards how the funding would be allocated would come to light following the completion of the review.
 - It was not the policy of the current Administration to insource services in those cases where it was likely to result in a poorer service. The

presumption was to insource unless there were good grounds not to do so. However, if there is evidence to show that a particular service could be improved by outsourcing, such as where considerable additional funding could be attracted, such as the highways contract, this would be done.

- The Council's contract with Sheffield Futures was due to expire on 30th September, 2020 and, by law, the Council was required to retender. The £2.6m contract with Sheffield Futures represented only a small part of the overall package of investment in young people in the City. The review undertaken did not just look at Sheffield Futures, but all various services relating to young people, particularly in the light of the adverse impact on young people following austerity. The performance of Sheffield Futures was irrelevant as the Council had to retender by law.
- The Council was aiming to deliver the best service possible for young people in the City, and it was believed such a service would be enhanced by the additional £2m funding. As part of the review, the Council was looking at how such services could best be delivered, whether it be by the Council or by third parties. Regardless of who provided the services, the overall aim was to provide a high quality provision for young people. The Council had extended the contract with Sheffield Futures on a number of occasions, but had now received legal advice that it could not extend the contract any more. Previous reports on the services for young people had included proposals with regard to both insourcing and outsourcing.
- Whilst the Council wanted to look at providing services for younger children, the age range in respect of this particular contract referred to teenagers (14+).
- The Council would be subject to the same pension liabilities if the services were insourced as if Sheffield Futures failed to be successful in terms of the contract.
- The Council received a number of views from young people about existing services and their needs. In particular, they repeatedly told the Council that they didn't like having to keep 'bouncing around' support services, having to 'tell their story' repeatedly to new keyworkers in different services, and would value having a more joined up and consistent support service that could meet a range of needs without needing to keep referring them on. It was also important that trusted adults or mentors and /or youth workers provided consistent professional guidance, advice and wraparound support. Every young person needed to be able to achieve their outcomes, and be defined by their contributions, aspirations and talents, rather than by problems or deficits.
- The priority of the current Administration was to invest £2m additional funding in services for young people, increasing the total contract value with Sheffield Futures to £4.6m. None of the additional funding could be used for any on-costs involved in terms of redesigning any services in the future. If the Council was simply looking at the financial side, it would go out to tender

to the private sector as they were likely to provide a cheaper service. The Council simply wanted to provide a better, and more integrated, service for young people.

- Regardless of whether the Council would have gone out to retender, it would still have requested a review of services.
- Ideally, the Council would have wanted the academies to co-operate with the Council statutorily but, unfortunately, there was currently no legislation requiring them to do this. Generally, however, the Council had a good relationship with schools and academies, through Learn Sheffield.
- At present, the services were delivered by a number of different workers, including Youth, Prevention, Targeted Youth Support and Youth Justice, and the aim was to make it easier for the young person, and stop them from having to go to each different service for individual support and advice. Whilst there was a need for the Council to revisit the role of community organisations and the voluntary sector in connection with the provision of services for young people, the Council was mindful that whilst it would still want volunteers, it would not want volunteers to replace paid workers. Schools and academies had to be very receptive in terms of collaborating with community organisations.
- The new service model gave details of how the Council could engage better with young people. Youth Clubs did not work for all young people, and there was now a need to trial new activity methods. The £2m additional funding would help the Council do this. There was also a need to ensure that communities were engaged in this work.
- It was still important that investment was made in services for younger children, although the young people in this contract were aged 14 or above. The Amber Project worked with young people in connection with criminal and sexual exploitation, and included representatives from a number of different organisations including the police, health, social services and community organisations, who all worked very closely with the young people.

5.13 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised; and
- (b) requests that the decision be deferred until the Scrutiny Committee has considered all relevant issues and made recommendations to the Executive, specifically to ask for (i) more information referred to in the original report to Cabinet as being available in April this year and, in particular, what aspects of the Service would be done in-house, and what would be provided externally and (ii) an impact assessment on the capability of the existing service provider to maintain other aspects of the provision currently contracted to the Council

(NOTE: The votes on the resolution were ordered to be recorded and were as follows:-

- For the resolution (6) - Councillors Colin Ross, Kevin Oxley, Joe Otten, Mike Levery, Alison Teal and Cliff Woodcraft.
- Against the resolution (5) - Councillors Alan Law, Mick Rooney, Mike Chaplin, Julie Grocutt and Sophie Wilson.
- Abstained (1) - Councillor Francyne Johnson.

(NOTE: Prior to the passing of the above resolution, an amendment moved by Councillor Mike Chaplin and seconded by Councillor Julie Grocutt, to replace paragraph (b) with the following, was put to the vote and negated:-

“Take no action in relation to the called-in decision.”

Votes on the amended Motion were ordered to be recorded, and were as follows:-

- For the Amendment (5) - Councillors Mike Chaplin, Julie Grocutt Alan Law, Mick Rooney and Sophie Wilson.
- Against the Amendment (6) - Councillors Mike Levery, Joe Otten, Kevin Oxley, Colin Ross, Alison Teale and Cliff Woodcraft.
- Abstained (1) - Councillor Francyne Johnson.)

6. SCRUTINY DURING COVID-19 - AREAS OF INQUIRY

- 6.1 This item was withdrawn from consideration, and the issues would be discussed outside the meeting.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 7.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on a date to be arranged.

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