



## **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 4 October 2023 at 6.00 pm in E201, Telford College, Haybridge Road, Wellington, TF1 2NP**

**Present:** Councillors L Powers (Vice-Chair), Z Hannington, L Parker, K Tonks, J Urey and O Vickers

**Also Present:** Councillor E M Callear (Cabinet Member: Education, Employment & Visitor Economy)

**In Attendance:** R Carey (Team Leader: School Performance), E Harvey (Lead Lawyer: Property & Commercial), S Wellman (Director: Education & Skills) and S Yarnall (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

**Apologies:** Councillor J Jones and A S Jhawar

#### **7 Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

#### **9 Work Programme Review**

The Democracy Officer (Scrutiny) presented the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee work programme. Members were provided with an update on the work that the committee had already completed and the work that was scheduled. Members were informed that any changes would be discussed during the keep in touch meetings with the Chair and Senior Officers and any updates would be presented to committee Members.

#### **10 Elective Home Education**

The School Performance Team Leader provided an update on Elective Home Education to the committee. It summarised the statutory duty of the Local Authority in relation to Elective Home Education (EHE) as well as the statutory right that parents have. The statutory responsibility was outlined under



Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. Under EHE, parents are not required to follow the National Curriculum and are able to set their own curriculum.

Following the COVID-19 Pandemic, the National figures for EHE students had increased with a local figure of 501 young people in Spring 2023. The committee were informed that the increase was a result of an increase in the difficulty experienced by children and young people to reintegrate back into school following the Pandemic.

The local authority worked with a number of different organisations to provide support to families that choose EHE. Some of the organisations that the Council worked with included Future Focus, Department of Work and Pensions and the Local Safeguarding Team.

Following the Pandemic, work had been completed to strengthen the level of support and the process for EHE families. In a recent OFSTED inspection, the process of support for EHE children was requested. Members were advised that the Local Authority provided advice and support to help children and young people through key points in their education such as GCSEs and career prospects. The process was summarised as a tailored process for the parent(s)/guardian(s). It was expected that the parent/guardian would report back to the Local Authority on their child's progress. This could take place through regular meetings with the relevant officer or progress reports, especially, 6 weeks after a child is taken out of school. Avenues were made available for support for when or if a parent/guardian wanted their child to go back into mainstream education. As part of the development of support for EHE families there were now two dedicated officers/advisors that worked to provide dedicated support for those families.

Following the presentation, Members posed the following questions.

*What would happen if there were safeguarding concerns?*

If there were safeguarding concerns then it would be referred to the Safeguarding Team.

*Could the Local Authority do more to monitor for safeguarding concerns?*

The committee were informed that there was no current guidance on how to monitor children that were classed as EHE. In terms of safeguarding, there were no requirements for parent(s)/guardian(s) to engage with the Council, however, if there were concerns, provisions were in place to act swiftly to get children back into mainstream education.

*Why is there not as much support for flexi schooling in comparison to EHE?*



The Director: Education & Skills explained that flexi schooling was at the Head Teacher's discretion due to the responsibility still being on the school and preference for children to be in education full-time.

*How did you ensure that those children that wanted to go back into mainstream education were able to via the appeal process?*

The committee were advised that Education Admission Appeals have a fair access panel. For those wishing to go back into mainstream education, routes were available for secondary schools where they would be allocated to one of the local authority schools.

*Were there any attainment statistics for EHE children/young people that sit exams?*

Nationally there were no statistics held and the Local Authority were not in a position to ask parents to have their children sit exams and report back to them on their grades.

*What happened if an individual does not sit their exams whilst being home-schooled?*

The committee were informed that there were no obligations for an individual under EHE to sit exams; as part of the support provided by the Council, families would be supported to choose the desired route.

*How much does it cost to sit an exam?*

It was estimated that it would cost £200 to sit an exam in a certified centre but this could vary due to additional costs such as paying the exam board to be registered.

*Were there other routes available to young people to gain skills rather than traditional exams?*

The committee were advised that the Council would support families to explore different routes.

*Do parents with EHE children need to meet with the Council before taking their children out of school?*

The committee were informed that parents would need to have a meeting with the Council and the school before a child were to be removed from school, however, if the parent does not attend the meeting then the initial meeting would still happen with the school and there would be a follow-up with the parent.



*How were EHE children funded to study?*

The costs were independent and the parents/guardians would need to cover the costs.

**11      Chair's Update**

Members were informed that the next committee meeting would take place on Wednesday 6 December 2023.

The meeting ended at 7.03 pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:**            Wednesday 6 December 2023