

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission Minutes of 7th December 2020

Attendees

Sophie Conway (Councillor) (Chair)
Margaret Gordon (Councillor) (Vice Chair)
Ajay Chauhan (Councillor)
Clare Potter (Councillor)
Katie Hansen (Councillor)
Sade Etti (Councillor)
Justine McDonald (Statutory Co-optee)
Jo Macleod (Co-opted member)

In attendance:

- Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care
- Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Early Years, Families and Play
- Anne Canning, Group Director, Children and Education
- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education
- Gabrielle Abadi, Planning Policy Officer
- Lizzi Bird, Planning & Implementation Officer
- Karol Jacobzyck, Strategic Planning Manager
- Dan Beagle, Senior Consultation & Engagement Officer
- Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help & Well-being
- Tim Wooldridge, Early Years Strategy Manager
- Jermain Jackman Co-Chair, Young Futures Commission
- Shekeila Scarlett Co-Chair Young Futures Commission
- Polly Cziok, Director of Communications, Culture and Engagement
- Rohny Saggarr-Malik, Project Head Young Futures
- Richard Brown, Head of Urswick Secondary School

Cllr Conway in the Chair

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the Commission:

- Cllr James Peters;
- Cllr Sharon Patrick;
- Cllr Clare Joseph;
- Ernell Watson;
- Shabnum Hassan.

1.2 Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Clare Potter.

1.3 Apologies for absence were received for Jermain Jackman, Co-Chair of Young Futures Commission for Item 5.

2. Urgent Items / Order of Business

2.1 There were no late items and the agenda was as published.

3. Declarations of interest

3.1 The following declarations were received by members of the Commission:

- Cllr Chauhan was a member of NEU and a teacher at a school outside of Hackney;
- Jo Macleod was a governor at a school in Hackney.

4. Child Friendly Places Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

4.1 A Strategic Planning Document has been developed to ensure that new development coming forward recognises the needs of children and young people. The SPD will seek to achieve this objective by 'maximising the opportunities for safe play and outdoor activities across our streets, estates, parks, adventure playgrounds, new developments and open spaces as children and their families explore and discover the world around them.'

4.2 The Child Friendly SPD was agreed by Cabinet in October 2020 and is being consulted upon with local stakeholders until 12th January 2021. The presentation of the SPD at the meeting allowed the Commission to formally review the SPD and contribute to the consultation process.

Hackney Planning Service

4.2 Officers from the Strategic Planning Service of Hackney Planning Service presented the Child Friendly SPD to the Commission (attached). The key points from the presentation are highlighted below:

- Planning Policy Framework - A borough wide Local Plan was agreed earlier in 2020 which will shape borough wide growth and development in Hackney. The Child Friendly SPD will complement this by ensuring that new development coming forward maximises opportunities for children and young people.
- Development and design of the SPD was informed through local youth engagement workshops and research with local stakeholders, most notably the Young Futures Commission report findings and other young people's forums.
- The Proposed child friendly Principles for Hackney's built environment collectively set out the vision for a built environment that supports the happiness, health, wellbeing and prosperity of all children and young people in the Borough. Identifying the different elements that all need to be present in order for the built environment to be considered child friendly. The more aspects a space / scheme/ project etc incorporates the more child friendly.
- Eight child friendly Principles have been developed to provide guidance to prospective developers which include recognition of the need to involve young people in decisions (shape my borough), accessible opportunities for children to meet and play (doorstep play) and developing access to greenspace (contact with nature).
- The design guidelines that follow the Principle section, set out the technical aspects of design that need to be considered with certain local plan policies to ensure the Principles are being met through planning policies and development schemes provide children and young people with opportunities

to connect with nature, play and move around independently in safe, healthy and unpolluted urban spaces.

- The draft guidelines are divided into a three- part neighbourhood place-scale that children and young people in Hackney grow up and move along: the Doorstep, Streets and Destinations.
- The CF SPD also sets out how young people should be consulted in the development process and the positive ways young people can be engaged and supported.
- The public consultation commenced in November 2020. Key elements of this consultation include the development of a dedicated webpage, targeted social media and other printed material. Covid-19 has meant that engagement will on the whole be virtual, though there has been some direct communication in local parks and via children's centres.

4.3 The Cabinet Member for Early Years, Families and Play welcomed the Child Friendly SPD and noted that the guidance was inclusive which would lead to development for a much wider demographic than than children and young people.

4.4 Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care noted that this was a good example of local place shaping. It was also emphasised that the development of the SPD would not only help shape new development, but the child friendly guidance could also be used retrospectively to improve existing sites and spaces. In this sense, the SPD would help all children in the borough and not just those living in new development.

Questions from the Commission

4.5 Although the Child Friendly SPD will help to shape development coming forward in the longer term, was there any potential for the principles to be applied on a quick win' basis to provide more immediate improvement for children and young people's environment?

- It is hoped that the SPD will have a real and practical purpose. The introduction of the Design Standard will help developers understand the key deliverables which will assist in child friendly development of all scales.
- The Service Wide Officers Group was established to support the development of the SPD and the draft design principles have already been used to inform other development within the Council, for example, the redevelopment of Shoreditch Park.

4.6 To what extent can the Child Friendly SPD influence the local transport decisions taken by Transport for London (TfL)?

- A collaborative approach had been used to develop the SPD which had involved a wide range of council services, including Streetscene, Parks and Housing services. This has helped to ensure that the SPD both complements and informs the priorities and plans of council services.

4.7 How will the Local Planning Service evaluate this policy and showcase best practice case studies to further influence and shape development?

- There has been a close working relationship with both Planning and Regeneration to make sure that the design principles are practical and effective, and which will ultimately result in these being used to inform development. The Design Evaluation Tool set out in the SPD will not only inform new development but will also assist in the evaluation of existing spaces.

4.8 In terms of the planned consultation, will (i) tenants and residents associations and (ii) parents be consulted?

- Whilst the consultation process for the SPD will focus on engaging children and young people, it is recognised that parents do play a vital role in shaping children's views and their use of physical spaces and as such they will be part of this consultation process. The consultation will primarily engage parents via schools, children's centres and youth centres. Elderly groups will also be approached through Age Concern for a more balanced view and to reflect that many spaces are multi-generational.
- Tenants and residents associations were also acknowledged to be a key plank within local engagement strategies and were specified in the 'how to engage' section of the SPD.

4.9 The planned consultation runs for a period of 11 weeks to January 12th 2021, part of which covers the Christmas holidays. Given the restrictions of Covid, will this be sufficient time to meaningfully consult stakeholders?

- Covid had impacted on the approach to the consultation but if further time was needed to reach specific groups this could extend the consultation period to later in January 2021.

4.10 How will the new Young People's Design Review Panel work? How will you recruit to this?

- Plans are at an early stage, but the Strategic planning and Conservation and Urban Design Team have met the project lead from the Young Futures Commission to support the onward development of this group. It is expected that plans will be finalised in early 2021.

4.11 The Commission thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members. The Commission would write to the Cabinet member and Head of Planning service with a formal response to the public consultation on the Child Friendly SPD.

Agreed: The Commission would formally write to the Head of Planning as part of the public consultation on the Child Friendly SPD.

5. Young Futures Commission

5.1 The Young Futures Commission (YFC) was set up 2019 to ensure that there are robust consultation and engagement mechanisms in place through which children and young people could meaningfully contribute to decisions that shape and influence their lives. The YFC has now concluded its engagement work with

local children and young people and has produced a report on its findings, including its key asks of the Council.

5.2 The Project Lead introduced the item. The report of the Young Futures Commission was approved by Cabinet in July 2020 and the recommendations (or asks) are detailed in the appendix of the summary report. It is expected that the Young Futures Commission will report back to local young people on the progress of their recommendations and what improvements will be made to local consultation and engagement strategies involving young people.

5.3 The Co-Chair of the Young Futures Commission (YFC) introduced this item and made a presentation to the Commission (attached). The key points from the presentation are as listed below:

- The YFC consulted over 2,400 young people which was far greater than expected. The initial consultation was followed-up with a second engagement programme which sought to clarify and confirm the key themes emerging from the initial consultation.
- 'Key Asks' were developed for six policy areas: education, training and employment; housing; regeneration; crime and safety; health and wellbeing and; local spaces and activities.
- A Secure Future (housing) - to improve access housing advice and support and improve the supply of quality social housing for young people;
- A Healthy Future - to review the provision and accessibility of mental health service provision;
- An Active Future - to ensure that young people have access to local community settings, such as local community halls, for sports, recreation and other activities;
- An Inclusive Future - to ensure that young people are involved in planning and neighbourhood regeneration programmes and to promote intergenerational dialogue;
- A Safe Future - to reduce serious youth violence, reduce the fear of violence that young people experience and to improve relationships between the police and young people;
- A Bright Future - to increase access to employment opportunities, quality and provision of AP, reduce inequalities in educational attainment and school exclusion and developing young people's skills for adulthood and life.

5.4 The YFC is a 2-year project which is due to complete in 2021. In terms of the next steps the YFC will:

- In conjunction with strategic partners produce a delivery plan for the key asks set out in the report;
- Review the role of the Young People's Board and Reference Group;
- Produce a final report in 2021 on the Commission's achievements and its legacy intentions.

5.5 The Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care thanked the Co-Chair for all their work in supporting the YFC. The Cabinet member noted that young people have not only articulated local needs, but have

also actively contributed to finding solutions to the issues raised. This project demonstrated that young people can and do want to be involved in local decision making and want to improve the lived experience of young people across Hackney.

5.6 The Chair welcomed the report and congratulated the young people and officers involved. The findings detailed in the report will help the Commission to hold the Council to account and ensure that young people are able to meaningfully participate and contribute to consultations in the future. The Chair also noted that it was encouraging to note the positive developments that have already taken place and that representatives from the TFC had been active in helping to improve services

Questions from the Commission

5.7 The report from the Young Futures Commission has highlighted serious misgiving from young people about the Council's current approach to engagement and involvement in that it's not authentic, it's defensive and resistant to change. Can you provide some examples of this and explain how the Council plans to tackle and improve its approach to consultation and engagement?

- Young people noted that limited finance and resources were often put up as a barrier to further engagement and involvement of young people or a barrier to delivery of young people's requests. In many cases, it was not about additional funds, but perhaps ways of doing things differently to meet the needs of young people.
- There were common themes in how young people viewed the Council consultation and engagement processes including that it was 'not really listening to concerns' and was 'not acting on concerns raised' which undermined trust in consultation processes.
- Young people themselves also better understand those consultation and engagement strategies which are more likely to be acceptable to young people and that this should inform the Council's approach.
- It was also apparent that young people felt more at ease discussing issues with other young people, which ensured that the data collected through the consultation was a more authentic and accurate representation of their views than might otherwise be the case.
- It was also important to recognise and value the contributions of children and young people in consultations and ensure that they are compensated for their time.
- Young people also reported that the Council branding was intimidating especially when they were required to complete forms or submit personal information.
- As a consequence of this, it was important that the YFC was independent of the Council, with its own website, branding and approach.

5.8 The Director of Communications, Culture and Engagement noted that in terms of the impact across the council, the Council was embedding the principles of youth engagement gleaned from the YFC. The most important learning from the YFC to date has been the recognition of the need to engage with young

people in their natural settings and where they feel most comfortable to talk. In terms of the legacy of the YFC, this is still being worked out across the in the Council this is still to be worked out, but the YFC had already had an impact beyin Hackney in that local young people had helped to improve communication for public health messaging for Covid-19.

5.9 To what extent was the YFC able to consult and involve young people with SEND?

- It was important for the YFC to reach a wider range of young people as possible and the Co-Chair's visited a number of settings (Huddleston Centre, BSIX) to ensure that young people with SEND had a voice in the consultation.
- It was noted that many of those issues that young people with SEND were concerned with corresponded to those of other young people more broadly. There was however a heightened sensitivity of young people with SEND toward crime and how safe they felt on the street. There was also a higher level of need around advice and support services for this group of young people and the need to ensure that they had equal access to employment and training opportunities as their peers.
- The Engagement Officer had also facilitated work with Side by Side and the Laburnum Boat Club, two local support services for children with SEND.

5.10 Can you provide further details on the YFC engagement with the Borough Commander?

- The new Borough Commander approached the YFC willing to know more about its work and the views of young people. TFC and ACCOUNT were two different youth engagement structures with different purposes. It is understandable that these different structures may have different experiences and views of local police services because ACCOUNT is focused solely on police engagement with young people, whereas YFC is more generic. The YFC had however raised the issue of the need to improve the cultural competence of police officers.
- It was noted that the Borough Commander was supportive of the recommendations of the YFC to prioritise tackling serious youth violence and addressing the causes of the fear of crime.
- It was also noted that there were a number of youth engagement bodies (e.g. ACCOUNT, and Young Black Men Project) which were working with the police and it would be helpful to harmonise approaches to working.

5.11 In terms of governance for the Young Futures Commission, who is responsible for the implementation of 'key asks' detailed in the report and to which Council body will progress be monitored and reported to?

- The YFC was anticipated to be a two year project but this had been extended to account for the impact of Covid. It was clear that responsibility for the implementation of the 'asks' needed the support of a dedicated officer, and the Project Officer had been asked to stay on in post for this purpose.

5.12 The Young Futures Commission is due to complete in 2021. What are the plans for this project after this time? How does the Council aim to maintain the

momentum and level of engagement with young people that has been developed through the Young Futures Commission?

- In terms of longer term structure and governance these are yet to be decided. The YFC has been funded to the level of £250k for the two year period, which is not sustainable beyond 2021, so a new model will need to be agreed which seeks to embed key structures and processes into the mainstream business of the Council. It was clear that council departments were learning from the outcomes of the YFC and were adapting their consultation approach to children and young people.
- It should also be noted that the YFC consultation is time limited in that it captures the views of children and young people at a specific time. It is likely that a similar exercise undertaken now may reveal some very different outcomes and expectations of young people as a result of the impact of Covid. This exercise needs to be revisited and refreshed to ensure that this reflects young people's views and experiences. Similarly, it should be recognised that the borough is changing very quickly and people's lived experiences are continually changing and evolving alongside.
- The YFC were keen to ensure that Hackney Youth Parliament would be involved in discussions about the legacy of this project.
- It was important to use a wide range of different engagement tools in the YFC as this not only facilitated access to a wider range of young people, but it also improved accessibility of engagement both of which enriched the quality of data it ultimately obtained from young people.

5.13 The Chair thanked the Co-Chair and officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission. The Chair requested that the representatives of the YFC could attend in the next municipal year when the project was nearing its completion and a review of the 'asks' could be undertaken.

Agreed: An update from the YFC to be taken in the next municipal year with a focus on the delivery of the key 'asks' and the legacy of the project.

6. Childcare Services Update

6.1 The Commission has a responsibility to maintain oversight of childcare provision and an update on Childcare Sufficiency across Hackney is provided each year. A report on the state of childcare provision in Hackney was provided to the Commission in July 2020. But due to the impact of Covid-19 it was difficult to fully assess how this was affecting childcare at this time. The Commission therefore requested a brief update for this meeting.

6.2 To support the discussion of this item, representatives of the Commission met with a number of Childcare providers ahead of this meeting to further understand how the pandemic had impacted on their respective services. The key headlines are attached to the minutes. The Chair formally thanked all those childcare providers who spoke to the Commission in advance of the meeting.

6.3 A short presentation was made to the Commission by the Head of Early Years and Early Help together with the Early Years Strategy Manager. This presentation highlighted the following key issues:

- National data had predicted the closure of up to $\frac{1}{3}$ of early years settings due to the impact of Covid. This had not been borne out on local data where just 3 closures had been reported to December 2020. As a consequence there was sufficient childcare capacity to meet local needs.
- There were 176 childminders, though just over $\frac{1}{2}$ were currently looking after children regularly. This was comparable to last year's figures.
- There were almost 5,000 children in early years settings which was again, comparable to last year.
- The take up of free two year old entitlement for vulnerable children was expected to be slightly lower than last year (decline of 100 places), but it was hoped that this would still keep Hackney among the highest performing authorities in London for this metric.
- Vacancy information from providers demonstrated that there were far more vacancies this year than last year and that many providers have indicated that they have less children in attendance than in previous years. It was a mixed picture however, for whilst some settings were operating at full or near capacity, others were struggling for numbers of children to attend to make the service viable. There is a concern that some of these settings may close in the spring or summer term if the numbers of children attending did not increase in the New Year.
- The DfE have not provided any detail as to whether any additional funding will be made available to the sector in the spring and summer term of next year, or if settings will be funded based on current attendance rates which for many, are lower than previous years. This uncertainty was creating some anxiety across the sector.
- It was also clear that the childcare market had changed where parents had reduced usage of childcare services, in many cases to just the 15 or 30 hour free entitlement and were not purchasing additional hours. It was not clear if this was a long-term trend.
- A number of settings have remained open throughout the pandemic but are now dealing with increased levels of Covid cases which means that children or staff are required to be sent home and self-isolate for 14 days. This was having an impact on income, costs and the operation of childcare settings.

Questions from the Commission

6.4 Early years settings noted that there had been an upsurge in demand for children with SEND and reported that there was now a backlog of cases for children to be assessed. Can you provide any explanation for the upsurge in demand for SEND services in this setting?

- An inclusion fund is available for SEND support for 3 and 4 year olds in early years settings. The Early Years Inclusion Fund is to support children with emerging SEND who have yet to receive a formal diagnosis. The autumn term has seen a huge increase in applications for the fund and these were currently being assessed.

Overview & Scrutiny

- It was noted that SEND services were continuing to operate though restrictions due to Covid were impeding the progress at which assessments were being undertaken.
- Covid has impacted on childhood learning and development at all levels. Children who have English as an additional language have faced particular difficulties on their return to early years settings as they have not had the previous levels of exposure to spoken English. In general children have become less confident, less independent and more anxious. Some children have also regressed in terms of personal independence and now need more assistance (eating, toileting).

6.5 Can you provide any further information on the financial sustainability of Children's Centres? Will Stay and Play remain freely available?

- Stay and Play sessions remain an important tool in assessing and supporting local children and families. These sessions were taken on line during the early pandemic but returned in the summer. There is now a programme of sessions to help reintroduce children and parents to Children's Centres. Numbers are however limited due to Covid restrictions. These sessions remain free for families to use and there are no plans to introduce any charges.
- An operating loss of £1.1m was predicted for Children's Centres for the year to March 2021. It is hoped that central government will compensate local government for incomes lost due to Covid which will offset 75% of lost childcare fees. There will be further opportunities for reimbursement from central government as Centres continue to face losses as a result of Covid. Both the Early Years Strategy and the Early Help Review will assess how the early years sector is supported across health and care systems.

6.6 It is noted that take up of 2 year old free entitlement for vulnerable and low income families has reduced over the pandemic. How is the Council continuing to target this cohort of vulnerable children to make sure that they receive the help that they are entitled to?

- The proportion of children entitled to the 2 year old free entitlement which have taken up childcare places was about 64% in Hackney. Overall numbers have declined by approximately 100 children, whilst disappointing, this is a relatively small proportion of the overall number of children involved. It should be recognised that parents do have genuine concerns about taking their children to childcare and this is made more difficult as parents themselves cannot enter premises to help transition and settle children.
- The Early Years service was making contact with all eligible families to make sure they are aware of the free childcare available to them. Where it is possible to match information from the DWP with local contact data, families are being contacted directly by telephone to explain in further detail how they can access this important service. Children's Centres help to broker a place for such children in childcare settings if a place was not available in the local Children's Centre. It was acknowledged however, that this work is currently challenging.

6.7 Given that providers in the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector support a majority of early years places, it is concerning to note that there continues to be widespread financial uncertainty in this part of the childcare sector. What work is being undertaken to further understand the financial needs of this sector? How is the Council ensuring that PVI childcare settings are aware of and claiming necessary financial support?

- The Early Years service was familiar with the needs of the PVI sector as regular contact was maintained with most local settings. A Business Support function was available through the Early Years Service to ensure that settings access the grants that they are entitled to and support them in business planning. The most important issue however was the number of children attending because if there were insufficient numbers then the nursery would not be viable in the longer term. The only way to improve numbers was to advertise and promote their business locally.

6.8 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from the Commission. This is a standing item within the Commission's work programme and it will revisit this in the next municipal year (2021/22).

7.0 Cabinet Member for Early Years, Families and Play - Q & A

7.1 The Cabinet member for Families, Early Years and Play attended to respond to questions within this portfolio. The Commission agreed to focus questioning on Childhood Poverty and for the Cabinet member to address the following questions:

1. How have local estimates of local childhood poverty been impacted by Covid 19? What do local data (such as free school meal entitlement) reveal about the nature of childhood poverty in Hackney?
2. How is the Council (together with community partners) tackling local childhood poverty? What are the Council priorities and how are families most at risk of childhood poverty being supported (e.g. single parent households, families with children under 5, BAME households). How are local services working together to coordinate a package of support for local families in need?
3. The Government has announced the £170m package (Covid Winter Grant Scheme) to support children and families over holiday periods. Can further detail be provided as to how much Hackney is likely to receive and how this money will be utilised to support local families?

7.2 The Cabinet member for Families, Early Years and Play responded to the Commission:

Data

- The Cabinet welcomed the opportunity to raise the issue of local childhood poverty and to explain how the Council and local partnerships were supporting local families in need.

Overview & Scrutiny

- Whilst there was no official data on the impact of Covid on childhood poverty, local data indicated that around 48% of children were after housing costs living in poverty (where household income did not exceed £14k). This is the 3rd highest rate of child poverty in London after Newham and Tower Hamlets.
- The proportion of children claiming free school meals has risen over the past 12 months from 32.2% to 35.2%. This is an increase of 777 children to 12,074 children.

Council Response

- All schools have been open to support vulnerable children throughout the pandemic, and most early years settings are now open providing childcare and early years support.
- School attendance has averaged around 90% since the start of the autumn term, which is not far from the average pre-covid (94%).
- The Council is working on three levels of support, Crisis, Medium term (longer term impact of poverty) and Preventative (early help).
- A Community Partnerships Network has been developed which will meet the immediate needs of those in poverty (food, power, water etc). Over 3000 meals a week and 2000 grocery top-ups were being delivered each week through the network.
- External funds had been levered in through DeFRA, Unicef and other charitable bodies. £280k of grants funding had been rerouted to support the community response.
- The Council had invested a further £500k in the Discretionary Crisis Support Scheme to bring immediate support to those in need.
- In terms of preventative measures these are focused on housing and employment measures and both of these are longer term challenges.
- Children's Centres have remained open throughout the pandemic and have continued to support children in need through Multi-Agency Teams.

Questions from the Commission

7.3 How does the Council know that it's reaching those most in need?

- The Council has undertaken a lot of work to understand local needs and those elements of the community which may be most in need. There have been many localised initiatives which, with their local knowledge of the community have been instrumental in reaching families who are in need which may not have come to the attention of the Council.

7.4 How is the Council working with HCVS in tackling childhood poverty?

- HCVS have become central to the local relief effort and helping to coordinate help to those communities most in need. HCVS has more effective reach into some local communities than the Council, so this helps to ensure that support is available to a much wider range of families and children. There were many scores of affiliated local organisations to HCVS.

7.5 The Urswick School has among the highest rates of social deprivation in London, yet a significant number of eligible families are not applying for free

school meals? What more can the Council do to target those families eligible for free school meals for their children and support them to make a claim?

- It was acknowledged that more could always be done to promote eligibility, and that the Covid Winter Grant would have a food focus which would enable support this. Whilst many council support programmes target vulnerable and in need families, it should be recognised that a stigma remains for receiving help and that some families do find it difficult to ask for help. Dignity and choice should be embedded in any local offer or assistance scheme to local families. It would be important to find new and creative ways to reach families in need in which they can accept help and obtain the support that they may need.

7.6 Is there a current welfare assistance scheme operated by the Council, and if so, what are the eligibility criteria and the level of funding available through it?

- The Discretionary Crisis Support Grant was available for families in need which has a budget of £500k. The Cabinet member agreed to supply further information about this scheme to the Commission.

Agreed: That further information to be provided to the Commission on the Discretionary Crisis Support Grant (budget, eligibility, promotion, take up etc).

Covid 19 Winter Grant

- A £170m national package of support has been made available to support families in need of the holiday period. Hackney has been allocated £1.1m from this fund to support local families with food and essential needs which must be spent by 31st March 2021.
- 80% of funding is ring fenced to support children and families of which 80% must be used to provide help with food or with utilities.
- It is intended to distribute £45 vouchers to 2,200 children under 5 identified by Children's Centres to be in need and to a further 11,500 children who are on the free school meal register. This will use approximately £600k of the total allocated grant.
- It was hoped that some monies could be used to raise awareness of free school meal entitlement and to enable families to apply.
- The remainder of the grant will be used to establish a fuel voucher scheme and further support for the Community Partnership Network. A fundraising drive will also be launched this week together with three community hubs where people can donate to support local families. There will also be an offer for children at Easter for children in need to be funded from the remainder of the grant.

Questions from the Commission

7.7 What criteria will Children's Centres be using to identify children in need and to target additional funds?

- For the children in schools the free school meal eligibility criteria will apply. This will mean that over 12,000 children will be supported through the scheme.

- Early Years will use the 2 year old free entitlement to determine eligibility for around 1200 children, but will also distribute children who are receiving support through a Child Protection Plan, Children in Need or who have a social worker.

7.8 The Chair thanked the Cabinet member for attending and responding to questions from the Commission.

8.0 Work Programme

8.1 The Commission noted and agreed the current work programme to the end of the municipal year is available for the Commission to review.

9.0 Minutes

9.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd November 2020 were reviewed by the Commission and noted the following actions:

- 1) The Children and Families Service provided further equalities data as requested by the Commission from 8th September 2020 meeting:
 - a) An equalities analysis of children's social care interventions at item 9a
 - b) A breakdown ethnicity of managers in Children and Families Service at item 9b
- 2) The Children and Families Service provided further data on the number of complaints received by Children and Families Service for 2019/20.

9.2. The Commission agreed the minutes.

10.0 Any Other Business

10.1 There was no other business and the meeting closed at 21.35. The date of the next meeting

The meeting closed at 21.35