



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
HELD FRIDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2020 AT 9AM**

PRESENT: Rishi Boyjoonauth – Chattenden (from 10.05am) – Elaine ; Jon Carthy - Byron; Nickie Forrest – New Road; Maureen Grabski – St Mary’s RCP Dora Indresano- Maundene; Kathy Sexton (Chair) – St Michael’s ; Barry Symons -Oaklands; Tim Williams – Wayfield

APOLOGIES: Dean Brewer

ABSENT: Karen Joy

IN ATTENDANCE: Anne Robinson (Clerking Service)

ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
1	<p>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>The chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting commenting on the importance of maintaining networks in the face of the relentlessness of the current pandemic circumstance.</p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Dean Brewer. Karen Joy’s absence was noted.</p> <p>It was also noted that Rishi Boyjoonauth was dealing with a school issue and would join the meeting shortly and that Matt Harris had moved out of the area so would no longer be attending.</p> <p>It was confirmed that all zones now had 3 representatives, Katherine Catherine Logan from Twydall now having joined from Zone 1</p> <p>The committee discussed matters to raise with guests to the meeting</p>	
2	<p>CHRIS KIERNAN (ASSISTANT DIRECTOR); MICHAEL GRIFFITHS (COMMISSIONING LEAD); AELISH GELDENHUYS (HEAD OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMMES)</p> <p>The guests listed above joined the meeting.</p> <p>2.1 Michael Griffiths and Aelish Geldenhuys At the chair’s request, Mr Griffiths provided a summary of key achievements over the previous year as detailed in the document that had been made available prior to the meeting. These related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a compliant pathway now being in place; • ADHD work having been benchmarked and work undertaken to ensure compliance with guidance and reduce the prescribing rate which was well in excess of benchmarked indicators; • the number of overdue interventions had been reduced from circa 3k children waiting to around 500-600; • MCH had become more proactive in terms of their offer to schools, for example related to speech and language; • there was now a far greater focus on the outcomes of interventions rather than simply counting the number of interventions that had taken place. 	

2.2	<p>It was recognised that further development was still required</p> <p>The committee recognised the advances, but commented that the impact of actions was not yet being seen in school. They raised a range of concerns including the backlog of referrals; the changes to the role of school nurses and whether their consequent workload was manageable; the expectations on parents to complete parenting courses prior to being able to access referral and the consequent impact on the delay in children receiving support and the nature of parental engagement with the school; the mismatch in communications about processes; the predisposition towards changes in direction before having given existing practices the opportunity to embed; the service provision and cost of MCH traded service, for example in relation to speech and language.</p> <p>Mr Griffiths clarified that it had never been the intention that engagement with the parenting programme was mandated and this had been clarified with MCH. In terms of the pathway for ASD, the rate of diagnosis following referral was relatively low and so the intention was to frontload support with the aim of reducing referrals that would not meet diagnostic thresholds. The commissioning group has also expressed concerns to MCH about school nurse capacity and were keeping this under review. Headteachers were asked to provide ongoing feedback. In response to a question about actual school nurse caseload, the committee was advised that clarification could be sought at the regular review meetings and fed back to the chair who would make available via the Zones. The traded service element of MCH provision was outside the remit of the commissioning group but there would be an interest in the impact of changes.</p> <p>Communication was discussed, and it was noted that regular meetings between MCH and parent and carers forums were taking place. There were also plans to roll out more regular health webinars. The committee suggested that providing feedback to headteachers and consulting them prior to changes being made would be beneficial. It was also suggested that the committee may wish to invite Mr Griffiths and Ms Geldenhuys to report at MELA executive meetings on a regular basis. The committee queried the distribution of Snapdragons newsletter and it was agreed that this should go direct to headteachers. In response to a question about gaining feedback, the committee were advised that a stakeholder survey had been carried out the previous year but response rates had been low. It was suggested that directing future surveys through schools may elicit a greater response.</p> <p>The committee thanked Mr Griffiths and Ms Geldenhuys for their attendance and they left the meeting</p> <p>Chris Kiernan – Assistant director Mr Kiernan thanked headteachers for their unstinting work during lockdown and into the new term. He reported that attendance across the LA was running at 94% which was well in advance on national benchmarks. He also advised of the need to follow a proper process in terms of lobbying for the removal of key stage tests for the 2020/21 year which would start with a proposal to councillors from the director, and if there agreement was secured escalation to the LGA. He suggested that a formal view from MELA on behalf of headteachers would be helpful.</p> <p>Rishi Boyjoonauth joined the meeting</p>	<p>ALL AH KS/Zone chairs</p> <p>KS AH</p> <p>KS</p>
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	<p>Mr Kiernan highlighted the priorities he was currently working on. These included: the short term Covid response; place planning; sufficient specialist places being available; alternative provision; the LA policy in respect of elective home education; exclusions; tackling the £13m - £14m overspend in respect of the high needs block.</p> <p>In response to a question about exclusions in the primary phase, he confirmed that primary fixed term exclusions were still higher than national, but the picture was improving in both phases. The lack of appropriate support was acknowledged though it was expected that this would be remedied in the mid-term by The Beeches provision. In response to a question about when this provision would be available, Mr Kiernan undertook to confirm and feed this back. In the meantime, heads were asked to discuss shorter term provision and gaps within this and alert him to these. It was suggested that reinstating nurture provision would be a helpful and that the cost of this, family therapy and support with attachment disorders would be offset by a reduction in costs associated with exclusion at a later stage.</p> <p>Mr Kiernan went onto explain that outreach provision provided by Bradfields and the Rivermead Inclusive Trust had been funded from the high needs budget but in view of the budget overspend and the fact that this provision was not an LA statutory duty, this was not sustainable. Asking schools to pay direct had budget implications for both the provider and the schools seeking support, therefore subject to school forum agreement, the preference was to implement a top slice so that the service was free at the point of delivery.</p> <p>The committee raised questions in respect of quality assurance, the closed nature of the market, whether top slice should be graduated and concerns that the approach would remove choice. The point that investment in outreach would also offset the need for special school places and consequent funding was made. These queries were discussed and the possibility of the contract being awarded to the existing providers for the first year with a wider procurement exercise commenced immediately could be explored. It was expected that the LA would carry out a quality assurance role. The committee were asked to consult as necessary and forward and questions to the chair for onward circulation to Mr Kiernan</p> <p>The committee thanked Mr Kiernan for his attendance and he left the meeting</p>	<p>KC</p> <p>All KS</p>
3	<p>KELLY COGGER AND STEPHANIE PONTER (SOCIAL CARE)</p> <p>The above guests joined the meeting and introduced themselves.</p> <p>It was noted that the previous guests had overrun their timeslot and Ms Cogger had another appointment and as such her update was brief.</p> <p>She reported that contacts from schools in respect of families were consistent with the same point the previous year and approximately 45% -47% were meeting the threshold for referral. She was happy to provide a breakdown for further discussion. Ms Cogger advised that she was intending to work with the LA safeguarding lead for schools to ensure that the threshold was being correctly applied and if so that the right support was being offered to schools so that the gap between contacts and conversion to referral was closed. She highlighted the importance of maintaining and improving the good relationships that were being established and invited contact from headteachers where a submitted contact had not met threshold so that a conversation about the reasons could be had and mutual understanding</p>	

	<p>achieved. She also expressed a willingness to attend both MELA and Zone meetings when available.</p> <p>In response to a question about the safeguarding meetings, she said she was keen to reinstate these and was happy to chair them with Wendy Vincent if necessary.</p> <p>With regard to the school support service, this had been put in place but not being utilised. The intention was to make an alternative discussion line available to support schools with groups of children where that would be helpful. It was noted that as children were now settling back into schools, some behaviours and disclosure were now coming to the fore again.</p> <p>It was agreed that Kelly Cogger would be invited to the next meeting.</p>	KS
4	<p>FEEDBACK AND WAY FORWARD</p> <p>Picking up on the theme of improved communication, it was suggested that there would be value in exploring the re-establishment of headteacher briefings via remote access, probably MS Teams. It was agreed that MELA would own what should be short 15 -20 minute meetings and LA personnel or others who had information to share be invited to do so. There would be no discussion at the meeting and any questions or comments would be raised via chat functions and answered outside the briefing, possibly to Zones. It was agreed that the chair should contact Chris Kiernan to establish his availability and communicate a date. Invitations would then be extended to headteachers</p>	KS
5	BREAK	
6	<p>REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MELA IMPROVEMENT PLAN</p> <p>The executive terms of reference were reviewed. It was agreed to recommend the removal of bullet point 2.7 as the MELA vision was separate to, not featured within, the document It was agreed to refer to Zones with a final decision to be made at the December meeting</p> <p>It was also discussed and confirmed that the funds were such that there was no necessity to levy a membership charge again this year.</p> <p>It was suggested that a finance policy be agreed that governed the custody of the finances and how transactions were made and recorded. Maureen Grabski undertook to make a template available</p> <p>The chair reminded colleagues of a previous discussion about achieving greater consistency between zone constitution documents. A possible template was shared. It was agreed that Zone chairs should raise this with zones and report back at the next meeting</p> <p>The committee considered the improvement plan. It was noted that despite Covid, action was being taken in some areas for example in gaining a greater insight and voice into the commissioning process. The possibility of including an element of Covid recovery was considered, particularly reflecting the impact of Covid on headteacher wellbeing. It was agreed that priority 3 would be updated to reflect this particular current focus and circulated for consideration and that the immediate priority in these challenging times was one of support for colleagues.</p> <p>Representation at the headteacher reference group was discussed. It was agreed that rather than the chair having to attend them all, she would attend</p>	<p>Zone chairs Agenda</p> <p>MG</p> <p>Zone chairs</p> <p>KS</p>

	<p>the next one to explain that in future zone chairs would take it in turns to attend these meetings starting with zone 1 on 15th October. It was noted that meeting invitations, agendas and supporting documents would be distributed by Margaret Lewis. It was agreed that heads would be informed to email all four zone chairs with any matters they wanted raised and the appropriate colleague would then pick this up and that the chair would advise of the timetable</p>	<p>Zone chairs</p> <p>KS</p>
7	<p>MEMBERSHIP OF LA GROUPS This item was noted as a continuing work in progress</p>	
8	<p>MELA FINANCE In the absence of the current treasurer, this item was deferred.</p>	
9	<p>MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING HELD 15TH MAY 2020</p>	
9.1	<p>Approval for accuracy The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record</p>	
9.2	<p>Review of actions and matters arising With the exception of the following, all actions were complete, dealt with on the agenda or in the light of Covid were considered spent or superseded.</p> <p>It was agreed that Martin Potter should be invited to attend the next meeting and asked to answer a set of pre-set questions to demonstrate accountability</p> <p>It was suggested that Mr Kiernan's outstanding actions were addressed through the proposed headteacher briefing.</p> <p>Rishi Boyjoonauth left the meeting at 11.45am</p> <p>Transition arrangements were discussed. It was noted that transition for the current Y7 had gone reasonably well. A concern was raised about the ability of current Y6 parents and children to view prospective secondary schools in the light of Covid, and that because of this the summer transition offer might need to be stronger. It was agreed that the concerns the committee had should be communicated to the secondary heads association and a query raised about how secondary schools intended to support school choices being made and subsequent transition arrangements</p>	<p>KS</p> <p>KS</p> <p>KS</p>
10	<p>ZONE FEEDBACK Zone 1 – It was confirmed the groups had met and more frequent meetings and a whatsapp group had been arranged to support wellbeing. All 3 reps were now in place Zone 2 – Due to meet on Wednesday 7th October Zone 3 – Due to meet Friday 9th October Zone 4 – Had met and discussed Covid arrangements including catering. Lee Anne Farrach had attended to brief on social care provision including reducing the number of child protection orders by using a stronger child in need provision. It was agreed that it would be worthwhile to invite her to a headteacher briefing to explain the plan</p>	<p>KS</p>
11	<p>FEEDBACK FROM LA MEETINGS The committee noted the chair's attendance at the headteacher reference group.</p> <p>Dora Indresano reported that she and Rishi Boyjoonauth had attended the Medway test meetings, highlighting the risk of reviews but that the pass mark</p>	

	had been lowered to take account of Covid. In terms of reviews, only work from Y5 before lockdown and Y6 since full re-opening would be considered. Nickie Forrest had attended overview and scrutiny. She was asked to forward bullet point headlines for circulation.	NF
12	AOB The chair shared details of the charges invoiced by Lawrie Rose in respect of making arrangements for the conference that had been subsequently cancelled due to Covid. These were discussed and while thought to be excessive it was agreed that the committee did not have sufficient grounds on which to challenge and therefore the invoice should be paid. In view of both cost and the continuing uncertainty about holding live events it was agreed that the chair should write to Mr Rose advising that his services were not currently required for the coming year and the committee would be in touch in the event they wished to recommission him	KS
13	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS Dates for future meetings were agreed as: 11 th December; 5 th February; 26 th March; 21 st May; 9 th July The chair thanked colleagues for their time and the meeting closed at 12.15pm	

Confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting	
Date: 11 th December 2020	

ACTIONS ARE LISTED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Item	Action from the meeting held 2 nd October 2020	Who by
2.1	Provide feedback to Michael Griffiths on the effectiveness of MCH and specifically the school nurse service	ALL
2.1	Make information available to the chair on the school nurse caseload for onward circulation to Zone chairs for dissemination	AH/KS
2.1	Invite Michael Griffiths and Aelish Geldenhuis to future meetings	KS
2.1	Ensure the circulation of Snapdragon's newsletter to headteachers	AH
2.2	Consulting as required, make a formal representation to the assistant director from MELA in respect of a collective view on 2020/2021 KS assessments	KS
2.2	Consult with zones on a) proposals to top slice from schools to fund outreach provision and forward questions to the chair for onward circulation to the assistant director	Zone chairs KS
2.2	Confirm planned opening date for The Beeches	CK
3	Invite Kelly Cogger and Steph Ponter to the next meeting	KS
4	Having established Chris Kiernan's availability, invite relevant LA/other personnel and make arrangements for headteacher briefing meeting via MS Teams	KS
6	Recommend to headteachers the removal of clause 2.7 from the terms of reference and advise that there would be no subscription required for this academic year. Confirm terms of reference at next meeting	Zone chairs agenda
6	Make a template finance policy for the custody and management of MELA funds available	MG
6	Consult of proposed consistent Zone constitution document for discussion at next meeting	Zone chairs
6	Update priority 3 on the strategic development plan to reflect headteacher wellbeing priority in the light of Covid and circulate for comment/agreement	KS
6	Zone chairs to attend the headteacher reference group on rotation from 15 th October commencing with Zone 1. The chair to provide the meeting schedule	Zone chairs KS
9.2	Invite Martin Potter to the next meeting to answer a range of pre-set questions from all to be forwarded to the chair	KS All
9.2	Request that Mr Kiernan's outstanding actions be addressed within headteacher briefings (communicate LA stat duties; SEND strategy meetings; consult on LA strategic improvement plan)	KS
9.2	Contact the secondary heads' association chair to express the committee concerns and seek assurances about arrangements for secondary school choices and transition	KS
10	Include Lee Anne Farrach on the headteacher briefing invitation list	KS
11	Forward a bullet point summary of matters discussed at overview and scrutiny to the chair for circulation	NF
12	Arrange settlement of Lawrie Rose's invoice and write to inform him that it was not anticipated that his services would be required in the coming year and the committee would get in touch if and when they wished to commission him again	KS