

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 16 MAY 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Eileen Quick (Chairman), Marion Mills (Vice-Chairman), Sayonara Luxton, Lynne Jones and Edward Wilson

Also in attendance: Sarah Bellars and Paul Loudon

Officers: Lynne Lidster, Kevin McDaniel and Andy Carswell

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Hollingsworth, Pryer and Mrs Airey. Cllr Jones was attending as a substitute.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received. Cllr Jones stated that her ward included St Peter's School, but was informed that she did not need to declare an interest.

### MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2018 were approved as a true and correct record.

### SEND STATEMENT OF ACTION UPDATE

The Director of Children's Services reminded Members that the Panel had previously considered the SEND area inspection, and informed them that this report was to provide an update on the progress that had been made over the two quarters that had since passed.

Members were informed that an Inclusion Summit was held on April 19<sup>th</sup>, which was the culmination of the first stage of the plan to address the weaknesses that had been identified by Ofsted and the CQC. The Director of Children's Services said that the Summit allowed the Council to meet with partner agencies; although issues had not been raised by the SEND inspection report regarding individual care, concerns had been raised over the lack of joined-up thinking between different partners.

Members were told that the DfE and Ofsted had identified 107 action points for the Council to carry out. The Director of Children's Services informed the Panel that of these, 49 were in the green category and on track to be completed; 30 were in the amber category as more work needed to be done; six were in the red category as significant issues had been identified; and five had not yet been started. A further 17 had been completed. The Panel was informed that the six red actions of concern related to four activities: reviewing whether the matrix used to assess the level of pupil need in mainstream schools was working effectively; reviewing the use of text messaging for obtaining feedback; implementing an updated ICT system; and agreeing the datasets and information to be updated on the Local Offer. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that the Local Offer was a requirement for all local authorities to make available online information to parents and carers regarding services that were applicable to them that were provided by the Council, health authority and voluntary sector, as well as schools with their own Local Offers. Members were told that the information needed to be easier to navigate and should include clear descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of each care provider. Regarding the ICT system, Members were told that the Council was on the software developer's work list.

Sarah Bellars, Director of Nursing at East Berkshire CCG, stated that it was important to emphasise the progress that had been made since the initial inspection, due to the complexities faced by some service users. In particular the progress that had been made in relation to getting the different groups to work together was of great importance. A key achievement that Sarah Bellars identified was the fact that all 750 statements of special education had been successfully converted into Education Health and Care Plans. The Chairman congratulated officers on completing this transfer.

Members were informed that a draft of the Inclusion Charter would be brought to Council by the Lead Member for Children's Services in due course.

It was agreed that the Evaluation Report would be brought to Panel when the review that was currently in progress was completed.

Regarding the money provided by the Better Care Fund, it was clarified that the approval of £150,000 for three years meant that a total of £450,000 would be provided.

Cllr Luxton asked if the multi agency group that looked at EHC plans to suggest improvements and highlight good practice, which was referenced in the report, had been set up. Sarah Bellars stated that the first meeting of the group had taken place and their first set of recommendations could be made available to Members. The next set of thematic audits would be available in September.

Responding to a question from Cllr Jones about satisfaction levels over the statement conversions, the Director of Children's Services stated that the feedback had been largely positive. He stated that five cases had progressed to the Tribunal Stage; of these, three had been settled in favour of the proposals put forward by the Council and two were settled in favour of those proposed by the parents. The Director of Children's Services said that the thematic audit created by the multi agency group had identified a need for improving communication with service users.

Sarah Bellars informed Members that a transformation programme was being implemented with CAMHS, in order to provide support for emotional health and wellbeing to families at the earliest possible opportunity and to prevent the need for secondary care and inpatient admissions. Members were told that the Ofsted inspection had highlighted that the needs of those on the autism pathway had not been met quickly enough. Sarah Bellars stated that unless things changed, a backlog of cases would build up. It was clarified that the autism pathway was a mechanism for ensuring parents could be given a diagnosis of autism, and to be signposted to services that were the most appropriate to them. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that he had recently met with his counterparts from Bracknell Forest and Slough, where it was agreed that mental health and wellbeing should be a key focus.

Cllr Wilson asked if the Inclusion Summit had been well received by those who had attended. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that 174 people had attended, including more than 70 from schools within the Royal Borough. He stated that in his opinion he had never seen such a high level of participation by attendees at an event, and there appeared to be a willingness amongst school headteachers to work together in sharing best practice. The possibility of establishing a network for SENCO employees was being investigated. Members were informed that some of the smaller schools, who may not be able to employ their own specialist SENCO officer, were sharing a single member of staff to work across more than one site.

Members were informed that going forward, an update would be provided each school term.

The Chairman asked for the Panel's thanks and congratulations to be passed on to the teams that had been involved in progressing the statement of action. The Director of Children's

Services stated that the Parent Care Forum had been of particular importance in ensuring this had happened.

**It was agreed that the Panel:**

**i) Noted the report and endorsed the work undertaken to meet the statutory deadline of converting all statements of educational needs to EHC plan by the due date**

**ii) Noted the progress on the delivery of 107 actions in the action plan and requested an update in October 2018.**

## WINDSOR MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPANSION

Members were reminded that a strategic approach regarding school places up to and through 2035 had been formulated as a result of the Borough Local Plan. It had been noted that in 2019 the middle school provision in Windsor would be insufficient, which had prompted a recommendation to expand middle school capacity. It had been agreed in principle to expand St Peter's CE Middle School as Dedworth Middle School was already in the process of expanding its capacity, St Edward's Royal Free Ecumenical School had no capacity to expand further and Trevelyan Middle School did not presently wish to extend so soon after conversion to Academy status. It had been agreed in principle that £2.7million would be provided for the expansion of St Peter's.

It was noted that there was a low response rate to the initial consultation on the proposals, and that the major finding from this was concerns relating to the impact on parking and traffic.

Cllr Jones noted that St Peter's was the smallest middle school and stated that doing nothing to expand it was not an option. She stated that the proposals had been discussed by Old Windsor Parish Council, which had only raised concerns over the dropping-off point. Cllr Jones asked if the prioritisation model could be reviewed, as she felt that it did not take a long-term view. The Director of Children's Services said it was difficult to forecast parental preference and there had been significant shifts in the last 18 months.

It was noted that the proposals only scored one out of ten in terms of value for money. The Director of Children's Services explained that typically a figure of £14-15,000 per school place represented good value for money. The concerns over the impact on traffic had raised this figure to £20,000 per school place; however the Director of Children's Services stated that it could be argued that this level of expenditure was appropriate, and that the benchmark scoring had been harsh. The Panel requested that the Cabinet paper explained why the scoring matrix had given the proposals one out of ten for value for money.

The Chairman noted that the Memorandum of Understanding only mentioned St Peter's School's admission policy once, and stated that changing the policy had been agreed by the school and the Diocese as part of the Academy conversion process. Cllr Wilson stated that the Memorandum of Understanding cleared up a lot of ambiguity regarding the Council's role with Academy schools. He said however that the Memorandum of Understanding should state that the expansion of St Peter's School would cover basic need for school places as a result of demographic growth, in order to aid public understanding. It was agreed that the Cabinet paper should be updated so that the Memorandum of Understanding should state that the expansion of St Peter's School was to cover basic need, and for the clause about PAN to also cover wider admission arrangement changes. Members noted that it was important that parents were kept well informed about the admission policy.

The Director of Children's Services informed Members that it was relevant Diocese's wish for the school to serve the local community, rather than being exclusively for those of faith. However this was not the case for all Diocese.

Cllr Mills asked if the school could take responsibility for getting out the right messages about expansion and school places, rather than leaving it to the Council. The Director of Children's Services stated his belief that there was a desire by the school to work with the Council, and

this had been evidenced hitherto. He stated that it needed to be made clear that expansion was in the school's own best interests, due to an ever-growing population, and a communications strategy was being developed to achieve this aim. The Director of Children's Services reminded Members that more of the Royal Borough's children than ever before were attending schools that were rated either Good or Outstanding and that in the most recent round of allocations 88 per cent of applicants were given their first preference school; by far the highest level in the last ten years.

**It was agreed that the Panel noted the report and:**

- i) Approved a budget estimate of £2.7m and authorised the Director of Children's Services with the Lead Member for Children's Services to undertake procurement and enter into contracts for the delivery of the expansion of St Peter's CE Middle School.**
- ii) Approved the signing of the *Memorandum of Understanding: St Peter's CE Middle School* by the Director of Children's Services.**

#### A) SCHOOL CATERING CONTRACT

The Chairman informed Members that this had been added as a late item to the agenda as it had been agreed to produce a full report for scrutiny, with the item having previously existed only as a briefing note to Cabinet. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that there had been a delay in compiling the report due to the initial responses from schools, with a significant number no longer wishing to be part of a central contract. Additionally some schools had asked to see the terms of the contract before making a decision on whether to sign. This impacted on the suppliers who were tendering, with some asking how they would cope with this uncertainty and what would happen if some schools changed their mind. The Director of Children's Services stated that he hoped to have been able to provide Members with a more detailed report.

The Director of Children's Services informed the Panel that the tendering process had involved asking the suppliers to describe their menus and to provide proof that they met children's nutritional requirements. Feedback from people that were supplied by these companies had also been sought in order to make a more informed decision. However the contract had been written in such a way so as to provide redress if the provider fell below the required standard.

The contents of the report were noted by Members.

#### WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Wilson requested an agenda item on Alternative Provision within the Royal Borough. The Chairman said she would like a presentation on the Council's obligations towards home schooled children. The Director of Children's Services said that as the two items were linked he would look to provide a report in the autumn.

Cllr Jones asked for an overview of the provisions made by Children's Centres, as there had been some statutory changes. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that a new Deputy Director had recently been appointed and she would be able to provide an update on social care and early help provision with regard to Children's Centres. Cllr Jones also requested that she be made aware of when scrutiny reports were going to be discussed at Panel.

The Chairman asked for a progress report on the Council's linked working with other local authorities in order to deliver services. The Director of Children's Services informed the Panel that this would be covered in the AfC Annual Performance Review at the next meeting.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.19 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....