

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2017

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

Also in attendance: Cllr D Evan and Mr Louden.

Officers: Kevin McDaniel, Catherine Powell and David Cook.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Mr N Cook and Cllr Airey.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor E Wilson declared a personal interest as his son worked for Holyport College. Mr Louden reported that he was a school governor representative on the Panel.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2018 were approved as a true and correct record.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Members considered the report that set out the Council's financial performance to date in 2017-18. Pressures continue within Children's Services with a net overspend of £1,659,000. The service continued to see high agency costs, home to school transport, legal costs and placement costs for children in care. There was also a pressure relating to the dedicated schools grant and reports recently presented to the Schools Forum on this issue had been included on the agenda.

The Chairman asked if the need for out of area placements was due to lack of local availability or the need for children to be moved out of the area. The Panel were informed that both were considerations and that there were less foster careers in relation to the growing pool of children.

Cllr Jones mentioned that over the last few years Children's services have had a number of budget pressures and that this should be taken into account in the budget build.

The Director of Children's Services informed the Panel that the last Schools Forum meeting had received three reports relating to the national funding formula and the dedicated schools grant.

The Panel were informed that the Royal Borough had considered a number of options to migrate from the current local formula towards the NFF rates over the two 'soft' formula years and the impact of this was shown per sector. 14 models of different scenarios had been run to try and work out the best fit for our schools. The first two models were run under the assumption that there would be a 0.5% transfer from the schools block into the high needs block, the third model did not include this transfer. All models were based on 2017/18 data.

The proposal to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs block was to support the implementation of the SEND strategy implementation action plan being led by a Schools

Forum working group. The idea was to use the proposed transfer to reduce demand on the high needs block.

The Chairman asked if the reports and recommendations had been well received by the Schools Forum and the Panel were informed that the Forum had been supportive of the 0.5% transfer into the high needs block to help support work being undertaken to reduce the deficit. Cllr Jones asked if the 0.5% would be ring-fenced and it was confirmed that it would.

Cllr E Wilson mentioned that small schools would be impacted by the NFF and asked what the Schools Forum were saying about this. The Panel were informed that the Schools Forum were aware of the impact of the NFF and that they had supported that initiatives such as shared resources or using MATS should be explored. The Panel recommended that a strategy for small schools should be explored.

Resolved unanimously: that the Children's Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations. As part of their deliberations the Panel also considered the Schools Forum reports relating to the National Funding Formula (NFF); the Panel recommended that Cabinet make it a priority to look at the impact NFF will have on our small schools and any mitigating actions that can be taken.

BUDGET PREPARATION 2018/19

The Corporate Director for Children's Services informed the Panel that the report was being brought three months earlier than normal to allow for full scrutiny and that the Corporate Services O&S Panel would be receiving the full Cabinet report. The other scrutiny panels would be receiving sections of the report that were pertinent to their remit.

The Panel were informed that page 71 of the agenda pack showed savings or proposed income for the service area. The Cabinet report had already been updated to show that children in care and placement costs savings (lines 8 and 9) had been removed and the savings would have to be saved elsewhere within the Council.

There had also been changes in structures when officers retired or left and strategies were under review. Joining AFC had also had other opportunities to be explored and there was also to be a £70,000 grant for school improvement.

The report contained the proposed fees and charges and approved capital programme that would be prioritised during the school holidays.

The Chairman mentioned that there had been some very expensive out of area placements and that there had previously been discussion about joining other authorities to try and drive down costs. The Panel were informed that there was a framework in place with other authorities and some of the cases were very challenging. Some providers were very transparent with their costs whilst others were not. It was a highly reactive industry with a high level of risk taken by providers. AFC were examining the prospect of providing provision as a community interest company.

Cllr E Wilson mentioned that there was some confusion on what academies had to provide for and what the local authority provided; he recommended that there should be a clear policy. The Lead Member for school improvement agreed that this would be worth investigating. It was recommended that we could look if other authorities had such a policy.

Resolved unanimously: that the Children's Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations subject to paragraph 4.6 (not included in the Panel's report pack) being the same as appendix D.

With regards to schools' funding the Panel recommended to Cabinet that a clear policy be introduced detailing funding responsibilities for schools

detailing what academies and the Local Education Authority were responsible for funding.

DELIVERING NEW SCHOOL PLACES FOR THE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

The Panel received a presentation on the Cabinet report regarding the borough's strategy to meet the likely impact of the emerging Borough Local Plan on the demand for school places in the borough.

Members were informed that the report set out the educational infrastructure that would be needed for the 14,000 extra homes described in the emerging Borough Local Plan by 2032/33. The paper set out the council's analysis of and approach to meet that demand.

Modelling, set out in the report, suggested that there could be a need for a total of 8,900 places over the next 15 years, with the first places needed in September 2019, 2020 and 2021. This equated to 20-22 new classes in each year group from the youngest in Reception year to post 16 capacity. The analysis was based on the housing trajectory within the BLP and updated pupil yields based on the current population of the borough. Table 1 in the report set out the resulting expected shortfall of school capacity. The modelling based on historically high levels of birth rate and 86% of schools judged Good or Outstanding suggested the council could lower the surplus place policy from 10% to 5%.

Members noted that meeting this level of demand would require the development of new schools in addition to the expansion of existing schools. Five new school sites had been identified in the BLP and it was assumed that these sites would be home to new Free Schools in line with government policy.

The report indicated a budget cost of £277m to deliver the places and a 5% surplus, a new SEND school, some early years capacity and the existing £33m investment in secondary school expansions. Funding came from various sources: Free school funding, government Basic Need Grant, CIL/S106 and other capital receipts. This was modelled in future financial planning projections.

The council was setting out a policy of requiring all parties to sign a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) clearly setting out the terms of any school expansions. This would ensure clarity and transparency across all negotiations while allowing council officers to explore any options and ideas that were generated to meet the likely need.

The report provided the latest projections, with action needed in the Windsor middle schools, where consultation was already underway, and potentially Maidenhead primary for September 2020.

Mr Loudon asked what the plans were regarding education provision for the golf course development and was informed that an all through school was planned but there were no plans in place yet.

Cllr Jones asked what happens before the BLP was adopted and was informed that there would be an evidence based conversation with the developer on what education provision was required.

Cllr E Wilson mentioned that the secondary schools that had expanded had not applied for government funding. The Panel were informed that the conditional improvement fund had a maintenance criteria and that there had been no school that had been able to access it for expansion.

Resolved unanimously: that the Children's Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations. The Panel felt that the Memorandum of

Understanding was a good idea and it was recommended that academies should be asked if they had tried to get expansion funding via the Conditional Improvement.

LOCAL AREA SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)
WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTIONS

The Panel considered the Cabinet SEND report that aimed to meet twelve objectives to be achieved by July 2018, which would create a transparent and accountable system to ensure that all children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities were appropriately supported to achieve their goals over the coming years.

On 1 September 2017 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission had published a letter following the inspection of the area's services for young people with additional needs.

The local authority, Clinical Commissioning Group, schools, health providers and representatives of the Parent Forum (PACiP) had worked together to develop an action plan to address the issues identified in the inspection. The paper set out the intended impact of the Written Statement of Action which had been signed off by a multi-agency group and submitted to Ofsted earlier in the week. The multi-agency group, chaired by a Director of the East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group would meet regularly over the next year to monitor progress and report to the Health and Wellbeing Board in addition to Cabinet and other agency leadership boards.

Sections 2.11 to 2.23 of the report set out the twelve things that people would see and experience differently as a result of the actions that were set out in the statement of action.

The Chairman was pleased to see an action plan was in place and that the Panel looked forward to updates on progress.

Resolved unanimously: the Children's Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations.

SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2019/20 AND CO-ORDINATED
ADMISSIONS SCHEME 2019/20

The Panel the Cabinet report to consult on the admission arrangements for borough Community and Voluntary Controlled schools including one proposed change to reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Alwyn Infant School from 101 to 90.

The Panel were informed that the local authority had a statutory duty to determine the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for the academic year 2019/20 by 28 February 2018. To meet that duty the council must consult on any proposed changes, which this year included the intention to reduce the published admission number for Alwyn Infant School from 101 to 90.

Resolved unanimously: that the Children's Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.45 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....