

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2018

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Natasha Airey and Paul Loudon

Officers: Lynne Lidster, Kevin McDaniel, Anna Robinson and Andy Carswell

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Pryer.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018 be approved as a true and correct record.**

Arising from the minutes regarding the Girls' Policy Forum, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services informed the Panel that one of the Forum's members was attending the meeting.

### QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Head of Commissioning - Adults and Children reminded Members that in 2017 Cabinet approved a new performance framework to monitor 25 key indicators biannually, with each Overview and Scrutiny Panel reviewing the progress of its relevant performance areas on a quarterly basis. In 2017/18 Children's Services had 13 indicators; of these, five had met or exceeded their target, six were just short and two were below. Five of the performance indicators had been removed from the 2018/19 performance framework. Of the eight indicators being reviewed by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel, five were on or above target, two were below target but within tolerance, and one – regarding the percentage of two to two-and-a-half year-olds to receive a review from a health visitor – was off target. Indicators on or above target included the percentage of schools in the Royal Borough that were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, and the decrease in the number of children on protection plans.

Regarding the reviews of children, the Head of Commissioning - Adults and Children informed the Panel that the percentage of children being reviewed was 56 per cent, up from 40.5 per cent in 2017/18. However it remained an area of focus for the Council to increase this figure still further.

The Chairman noted that one of the indicators to miss its target in 2017/18 related to the ranking for Free School Meal Attainment cohort, and asked how the Council was looking to improve the ranking. The Director of Children's Services stated that it would be a few months before the latest indicative data would be available, although the provisional data indicated that there had been a reduction in the cohort of children who were eligible for free school meals. Because of previous improvements, it was now harder for the attainment gap to be closed even further. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that the Free School Meal Attainment cohort remained a key focus for the Council. The Cabinet Member for

Children's Services said this issue had been discussed in detail at the School Improvement Forum.

Regarding the percentage of two to two-and-a-half year-olds being reviewed, the Director of Children's Services informed Members that this was from a health visiting service that the Council was now providing; previously it had been provided by the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. Members were told that the families of all eligible children had been given the opportunity of a face-to-face assessment with a health visitor but a significant proportion of parents had declined the offer. The most vulnerable families tended to accept the offer but those in more affluent wards did not. The ward with the lowest takeup was Bray. Families had indicated that they would receive feedback from elsewhere, for example nurseries, on how their children were progressing and if there was any cause for concern. Trials of running the assessments early in the morning and post rush-hour had been run without a great deal of takeup. The Director of Children's Services said that this did allow the opportunity for weekend clinics to be run and for greater flexibility. Overall the Director of Children's Services stated he was satisfied those who were most vulnerable were accessing this review, and that it was not an overall area of concern despite the indicator missing its target. Across the south east the takeup was on average 77 per cent. However some local authorities reported a takeup of up to 98 per cent. The Director of Children's Services stated that this was due to some authorities having alternative ways of providing the assessment, such as through paper-based surveys, whereas the Royal Borough preferred for the assessments to be done face-to-face with a healthcare professional. Ways of making the service more attractive to residents were being looked into, but the Council was not committing to anything until all options had been explored.

Cllr Wilson raised the attainment gap and stated his belief that tackling this was of the utmost importance to the Council. He asked why the performance framework focused on early years rather than support for children across the age spectrum, stating that performance should be tracked over a longer period of time. The Director of Children's Services stated that this was a long-term focus for the Council. He stated that he had recently addressed all of the new teachers in the Royal Borough and had told them that one of their responsibilities would be to identify disadvantaged pupils and understand what they could do to help them. Schools were now expected to provide evidence of the impact of expenditure on pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Director of Children's Services stated that although there was a focus on early years pupils, there was also a focus on key stage 4 children. Responding to a question from Cllr Luxton about teachers who did not detect children who were disadvantaged, the Director of Children's Services stated his belief that he was satisfied that all schools in the Royal Borough had a suitable performance management system in place and sufficient opportunities for training and development.

Cllr Wilson stated that it was worth highlighting in the report that there were no schools in the Royal Borough that had inadequate Ofsted ratings, or were in special measures. The Director of Children's Services stated that the Council's School Leadership Team was key to this as they would assist schools prior to an Ofsted inspection, even those that were Academies and did not come under the Council's jurisdiction.

Cllr Wilson asked about the inclusion metric regarding the collaborative working performance, which had not been included in the report. The Director of Children's Services stated that this would be included in the Education Report at the end of the year, and it would be going to the Health and Wellbeing Board. It was agreed that the report would also be considered by the Panel at its February meeting.

**It was RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that the Panel noted the report and:**

- i) Endorsed the 2018/19 Performance Management Framework, outlined in table 1 and appendix A and;**
- ii) Requested relevant Lead Members and Heads of Service focus effort to improve performance in areas of current underperformance.**

## DEMAND FOR SCHOOL PLACES

The Director of Children's Services reminded Members that this report related to the long-term strategy for school places needed over the next 20 years as part of the Borough Local Plan. It had previously been anticipated that up to 20 additional classes per year group would be needed. Members were informed that forecasts based on birth rates from 2014-17 and the investment made in school expansion during that time projected that the current position was that no further school expansion would be needed for up until 2021. However this would be reviewed each year and if building projects were delivered in the interim period, this position was subject to change.

The Director of Children's Services drew Members' attention to paragraph 2.9 of the main report, which stated that there was a surplus of spaces in the Windsor First School system. A meeting of headteachers was planned for the following week, where the sustainability of, in particular, Windsor First Schools would be discussed. Temporary reductions in class sizes and the sharing of resources across more than one school – for example a SENCO officer – were suggestions that had been made to try to ensure no schools had a budgeting shortfall while pupil numbers were down.

The Director of Children's Services stated that no commitment was being made to any particular scheme at the moment and that all options were being explored. The Council was continuing to spend from the £1.3million budget set aside for this work and no additional funding was required.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 2.22 of the main report, which stated that provision for a new special needs school in the Borough was likely. The Director of Children's Services stated that funding bids from the government were now being accepted and that the Council was in the process of compiling a bid. This had come ahead of the Council's long-term plans and the Director of Children's Services stated that further funding opportunities were likely to arise if this bid was not successful.

The Chairman asked if the figures relating to Windsor First Schools included children from outside the Royal Borough. The Director of Children's Services said the projected figures included a historical statistical analysis of children from outside the Borough. He reminded Members however that the Royal Borough was also an exporter of children to other boroughs. Members were informed that in contrast to the Royal Borough, Slough had seen a surge in population growth and the Council there were investing in a school expansion programme.

Cllr Luxton stated her belief that the handbook for parents applying for school places was not clear in certain aspects and said that it should be updated. The Director of Children's Services stated that the handbook was reviewed every year, but the Council was not necessarily obliged to update it. However he stated he was happy to receive feedback, as previous feedback relating to school appeals had been useful in shaping the contents of the handbook. The Chairman stated that the handbook explaining applications for school places needed to make it clear to parents that all of the preferences needed to be filled in, particularly if their higher preferences were for out of Borough grammar schools. Members suggested that a flow chart showing how the process for allocating school places worked would be helpful.

The Chairman stated that she had been contacted by a headteacher in her ward who stated that if there was a drop in the number of children in the Royal Borough, their surplus spaces would be taken by those from out of the Borough. The headteacher had expressed concerns about the impact on their school if the PAN was reduced. The Director of Children's Services stated that the headteacher had also contacted him. He stated that reducing class sizes was one of the options being considered, as this had implications for the sustainability of schools, but it did not necessarily mean that class sizes would definitely reduce. The Director of Children's Services said that discussing the future sustainability of schools showed an example of collaborative working. A previous example of collaborative working had allowed good pupil progress at Bisham School.

Cllr Wilson stated there was a perception amongst residents that there weren't enough school spaces in Windsor, and that people would be surprised to learn that many schools were under PAN. He stated his belief that some schools would not be sustainable going forward if this remained the case, and stated that discussions needed to take place about sustainability, particularly for smaller schools. Cllr Wilson stated that there was a school in his ward where a large proportion of children came from Burnham; however the school's infrastructure was designed for local children to walk there, and there were frequent complaints about traffic and parking around the school due to the number of pupils travelling by car from Burnham. The Chairman stated that some smaller schools had investigated the possibility of installing an executive headteacher to work across two or three schools, as well as sharing resources. The Director of Children's Services said that this had been the case with Bisham School, which had joined an Academy Trust and had an executive headteacher. Members were in agreement that Cabinet needed to be made aware of the subject of public misconceptions on school capacity.

Regarding the proposed special needs school in Windsor, it was noted that a suitable site had been identified. Cllr Wilson asked if it would be possible for a Free School provider to give a talk on the reasons why a special needs school was needed and what it could look like, as it was unclear to residents why it had been proposed in the Borough Local Plan. Cllr Wilson stated that smaller schools sometimes struggled when they accepted a statemented pupil as they sometimes did not have a dedicated SENCO. The Director of Children's Services said that the application for funding mentioned earlier required an articulation of what was needed, and he stated that he was happy for this information to be shared. Council officers had worked with staff at Manor Green School to put together this information. Members were informed that Manor Green School had been built for 180 pupils but there were currently 269 on role, of which 70 came from outside the Royal Borough. Members were informed that pupils from the Royal Borough would go to schools outside the Borough if their needs required it; there was a school in west Berkshire that accepted a significant number from the Royal Borough. The Director of Children's Services stated that the proposed school would be characterised as one for children from Windsor, but depending on what special needs it catered for, it could also accept pupils from further afield. The Director of Children's Services said that getting in a provider to give a talk could prove problematic as there might then be an expectation that that provider would then deliver the proposed school.

Cllr Richards left the meeting at 7.46pm.

Cllr Luxton stated her belief that it was right to have a special needs school in Windsor as this would also help to serve children from Ascot and the Sunnings, and there was a perception that new facilities were only being provided in Maidenhead. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services reminded Members that if the proposed special needs school was approved, it would still take at least six years for it to be ready. She stated that additional information about the site could be communicated to residents. Regarding Forest Bridge Special School, it was expected that their new facility in Braywick Park would be ready within the next couple of years. It was also expected that Braywick Court Free School would be in a position to operate from its new premises in time for the next school year.

It was noted that the majority of the discussions at the meeting had focused on school place provision in Windsor. It was confirmed that it was currently felt there was no need for additional capacity to be provided in Maidenhead until 2022. Major infrastructure projects were expected to be completed by 2027, but it was not yet known how this would impact on the demand for school places.

Members agreed that discussions on the sustainability of schools needed to take place, particularly with regards to the needs of smaller schools. It was felt that the Schools Forum was the most appropriate place for this to happen, and that partners from Achieving for Children should be involved in these discussions. Members noted that the report referred to

existing school capacity and current birth rates and trends, and not what was expected in the future.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Members noted the contents of the report. Members stated in their comments to Cabinet that consideration needed to be given to the future sustainability of all schools, and smaller schools in particular, and that the Council should discuss with Achieving for Children what support mechanisms there would be. Members requested that these discussions should be facilitated through the Schools Forum. Members also stated that the booklet explaining applications for school places needed to make it clear that all preferences needed to be completed, particularly if out of Borough grammar schools were first and second preferences. It was suggested that a flow chart showing how the school place allocation process worked would be helpful. Members stated that there was currently a misconception about capacity, particularly in Windsor Schools.

WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the updates on fostering and the Girl's Policy Forum mentioned in the minutes of the previous meeting had not been added to the Work Programme. It was agreed that the update on the Girl's Policy Forum would be moved to the January meeting. It was also agreed that the metrics framework regarding inclusion, as discussed earlier in the meeting, would be included in the Work Programme for January's meeting.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.11 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....