

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2017

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

Also in attendance: Cllr N Airey

Officers: Kevin McDaniel and David Cook.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr Richards, Cllr Pryer and Mr N Cook. Cllr Story attended as a substitute.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor E Wilson declared a personal interest as his son worked at Holyport College as this was not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest he stayed and considered the items.

Councillor Jones declared a personal interest in item 5 Windsor Middle School Expansion as it was in her ward, as this was not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest she stayed and considered the item.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2017 were approved as a true and correct record.

Cllr Jones mentioned that she had not been present at the meeting but after listening to the recording she was concerned that a Cabinet Member took part in the meeting and there was a conflict between the roles of scrutiny members and that of Cabinet.

The Chairman replied that the Head teacher of Holyport College and the Leader had asked to speak on the SEND agenda item to which the Panel agreed. Cllr Jones felt that Cabinet was the appropriate Forum for Cabinet Members to express their views.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Corporate Director for Children's Services introduced the latest Financial Update Cabinet report.

The Panel were informed that items within the report under the Panels remit were:

Paragraph 4.3, placement costs for children in care, had a projected overspend of £873,000 if the demand for placements continued. Over the last two years there had been an increase in the number of children in care and more children having to be placed outside the borough. Cornerstone had been contracted to run a programme of foster care recruitment. There was also an associated pressure on legal fees as highlighted in paragraph 4.5 of the report.

Paragraph 4.4, home to school transport, the £296,000 pressure reported last month remained the same.

Paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7 highlighted the pressures with agency staff costs and additional ICT costs with the transfer of health visitors into the Royal Borough. There was also a pressure to the dedicated schools grant that which had a three years recovery plan in place as approved by the Schools Forum.

Cllr Jones asked for more detailed explanation of the dedicated schools grant pressure as she was concerned about funding pressures on our schools; especially the smaller primary schools. The Panel were informed that the Schools Forum were due to consider this at their next meeting and if required the report could be brought to Panel.

Cllr E Wilson asked how many schools carried a budget surplus and how much funding academies get as he is often asked by residents. The Panel were informed that the report going to the Schools Forum would show the level of surplus carried by maintained schools with regards to academies we would have to ask for their published accounts. The Director was not aware of any late payments to schools regarding SEND but he would look into this.

Cllr Story asked about the planning for payments around placement costs and legal costs. The Panel were informed that historically the borough had been good at keeping children in our care however the last 9 months have seen an unprecedented increase in the need for out of borough placements.

The Chairman asked if we had been successful in developing our own social workers and was informed that out of the eight that had been recruited 6 had recently joined as full time social worker, one had decided not to be a practicing social worker whilst the other had decided to work elsewhere.

Cllr E Wilson asked if there had been any cost benefits of joining AFC and was informed that as it had only been three month it was not expected to see any yet but there had been additional support to services.

Cllr Jones asked if the problems with home to school transport had been resolved and the Panel were informed that there had been a processing issue earlier on due to changes to the contact centre and experienced staff moving to other areas. Lessons had been learnt and the problems were resolved.

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

WINDSOR MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPANSION

The Panel considered the Cabinet report for consultation on a proposal to expand St Peter's CE Middle School.

The Director explained that the council was aware of a deficit in places in the Windsor middle school system in September 2019. There were four middle schools in the borough. St Peter's was the smallest and had recently received a rating of Good by Ofsted. The report requested £20,000 to cover a feasibility study and consultation work. A report would come back to Cabinet in March 2018 to consider the feedback.

The Chairman mentioned that the report was clear that there was a need for extra spaces in the Windsor system.

Cllr Jones said that she was pleased to see the proposal to explore the expansion of St Peter's as if accepted it would help the school become bigger with better facilities. It was an opportunity for St Peters to catch up with the other Windsor middle schools.

Cllr E Wilson asked why we were planning to expand an academy school instead of Trevelyan and if the trust had given guarantees about future admission arrangements. The Panel were

informed that Trevelyan had an admission number of 150 but had asked to reduce this to 120, this request had been refused as forecasts showed that a PAN of 150 was required in the future. With regards to Trevelyan being a feeder to Slough Grammar schools the Panel were informed that a schools admission arrangements could not guarantee admission to another school, a grammar school could try and have Trevelyan as a feeder school but there would need to be a consultation period.

Cllr E Wilson asked what guarantee we had that the school would not change their admission arrangements. The Panel were informed that in November a strategy paper on school places would be brought forward and this would have lessons learnt from the Lowbrook expansion.

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

SEND

The Panel received a verbal update on the SEND inspection presented at the last meeting.

The Panel were informed that the inspection took place over July / August 2017 and the inspection field work included visits to eight settings and conversations with 150 parents. The inspection letter was published by Ofsted in September 2017 and a review of the findings was with officers, schools, health partners and parent forum. A report on the findings was presented to this Panel.

In October 2017 a written statement of action and work streams would be established with the written statement of action and key targets for improvement being signed off by Cabinet in November 2017. There would be quarterly monitoring by the Department for Education with oversight by this Panel.

The Panel were provided with examples of the targeted outcomes that were expected to be achieved and were informed that the layout had been set by Ofsted. This included targeted themes that listed what Ofsted and CQC said and the outcomes trying to be achieved.

The Panel were informed that a working group of schools, health partners, parents and LA staff had developed a range of ideas that will be proposed to be included in the action plan and some of these were:

- Training and expertise to help schools develop approaches to inclusion.
- Developing pre-EHCP services based on local experience and outreach models of delivery so that everyone is up to date.
- Targeting resource to support the most inclusive settings.
- A local "Inclusion Mark" that services, settings and schools are assessed for.
- Developing a "problem solving" resource for young people when the current plans are not working.
- Refresh the Local Offer and raise awareness of reasonable expectations.
- Support wider awareness of charity and support groups for particular needs.
- Improve ability to give feedback in a consistent way across all services.

The Chairman mentioned that it was good to see progress being made and that she look forward to a more detailed progress report when they consider the Cabinet paper at the next meeting.

Cllr Jones questioned the waiting times for assessments and therapists and if this was a resource issue rather than a change in the system. The Panel were informed that the issues raised in the Ofsted report related to the change in health and care plans. With regards to staff turnover this was because of the loss of expertise rather than resources.

With regards to access to therapy resources have been identified and CCG would be commissioning more. With regards to autism there would be a drive to try and identify it earlier.

Cllr E Wilson mentioned that there did not seem to be the urgency that was mentioned in the Ofsted report. The Panel were informed that we could do quick fix initiatives but there was a need for tangible progress in the right direction. With regards to comments at the previous meeting by Walter Boyle, Head of Holyport College, the director did not recognise an issue in accessing pupil premium.

The Chairman thanked officers for bringing a progress report to Panel.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.10 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....