

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 27 JUNE 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Sayonara Luxton, Marion Mills, Eileen Quick and Edward Wilson

Also in attendance:

Officers: Kevin McDaniel and Andy Carswell

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Mills nominated Cllr Quick for the role of Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Luxton and unanimously agreed by Members. Cllr Quick was therefore elected Chairman for the 2018/19 municipal year.

Cllr Quick nominated Cllr Mills for the role of Vice Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Luxton and unanimously agreed by Members. Cllr Mills was therefore elected Vice Chairman for the 2018/19 municipal year.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Paul Loudon.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on May 16th 2018 were approved as a true and correct record.

Cllr Luxton stated that comments relating to the Panel had been made at the previous evening's meeting of Full Council, which Members needed clarification on. It was agreed that the issue would be investigated with the relevant Members.

Arising from the minutes, the Director of Children's Services informed Members that a review session had taken place with officers from the Department for Education earlier in the day. With regards to the SEND Statement of Action, the verbal feedback from the DfE was that they were very pleased with the progress that had been made, particularly as the arrangements had been complicated by the transfer to Optalis. It was hoped that this verbal feedback would be given to the Council in letter form in due course. The Chairman stated that the officers and partners involved should be congratulated for their role in ensuring this progress.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Children's Services introduced the item and explained that the final report would be published and shared with residents. Of particular note to the Panel were the Key Performance Indicators, which were targets set at the start of 2017/18 for a number of service areas. The Director of Children's Services stated that three of these Indicators related to children's services. Of the 25 Indicators only two had been given a red rating of having missed its target and one of these related to children's services, regarding the proportion of children

aged two to two and a half who had taken part in health checks carried out by Council health visitors. It was noted that 46.6 per cent of children in this age group had received a health check, compared to the target of 77 per cent, which was the national average. An improvement towards 60 per cent had been made in more recent months. The Director of Children's Services said the causes of not meeting the target included the transfer of the service into RBWM from the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, which was coupled with the introduction of a new IT system which meant that for some time no health checks could be processed. Members were informed that there was now a renewed focus on contacting families who had indicated that they did not want a health check. It had been identified that a large proportion of these families had children in nursery, and because they had been updated on the progress that their children were making they were satisfied that they did not need an additional health check from the Council. Work was now taking place to market the benefits of the health checks to residents. The target remained at 77 per cent.

Cllr Wilson asked how the Key Performance Indicators had been selected, and noted that the Pupil Premium and attainment rates of disadvantaged children had not been included in the report. The Director of Children's Services stated that the priorities had been selected through the Lead Member process, and the Pupil Premium was referenced in the annual report on educational standards; however he agreed that it should be referred to in this report.

Cllr Wilson noted that there was no reference to the numbers of pupils who had been allocated their first preference school. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that the figure was 88 per cent, the highest in the Royal Borough for ten years; however for certain groups there had been challenges in getting in to their preferred schools, and the figure of 88 per cent was liable to change due to the ongoing admission appeals process.

It was noted that the other Indicator to be given a red rating for not meeting its target was the number of telephone calls to be answered with 60 seconds. It was clarified that this related to calls going through the customer contact centre and not necessarily through to specific departments, including children's services, school admissions etc. Regarding the Indicators that had been given orange ratings, it was noted that this included the number of days to process new benefits claims or changes in circumstances had just missed the target of 3.5 days and the average was 3.7 days; however, this was against the national average of 22 days. The Director of Children's Services explained that this meant the Council was one of the best performing in the country in this respect. Members felt that the size of the text relating to these targets should be increased so it could be seen more clearly, and that a key should be included to explain the table's contents. A comparison of the Key Performance Indicators against previous years and/or other local authorities was also suggested by Members.

Cllr Wilson noted that many residents seemed to be unaware of the investments being made with regards to the schools expansion programme, and that there was a perception in Windsor that there weren't enough school places. He stated this was despite investment of £4million into two schools, which were admitting pupils under the Planned Admission Number. The Director of Children's Services stated his belief that the Council needed to do more in publicising investment in schools. He noted that the schools being expanded were Academies, and the signage outside them stated that the Academy was working on a project rather than stating that the Royal Borough was expanding school place capacity. The Director of Children's Services said he would work with the Communications team on this matter, although it was noted that some projects would be dependent on the appropriate planning permission being given.

Members suggested that the size of the diagrams on pages 10 and 11 of the report could be reduced and the text increased, in order to make it easier to read.

Cllr Wilson noted that the contents of the report was entirely positive, and suggested that for balance information on challenges and issues that the Council faced should also be included. The Director of Children's Services stated that the report did highlight the major change of transferring of services to AfC and Optalis. He added that the decision on which Key

Performance Indicators to highlight had been made through the Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Service but was not sure if it had gone out to wider consultation. Members were told that the design of the final report had been led by the Communications team. The Chairman suggested that in future the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panels should be asked for their views on which Indicators should be included in the annual report.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Panel noted the report and:

i) Noted the progress towards meeting the council's strategic objectives.

ii) Endorsed the Annual Report 2017/18, appendix A, to be reviewed at a meeting of the Full Council.

iii) Requested the Managing Director and Executive Directors, in conjunction with Lead and Principal Members, to progress improvement actions for areas that are off target.

OPTIONS FOR INCREASED CAPACITY AT NEWLANDS GIRLS' SCHOOL

The Director of Children's Services informed Members that although 88 per cent of first school preferences had been allocated for secondary school admissions in September 2018, issues had been raised about girls who currently attend Oldfield Primary School being unable to get into Newlands Girls' School. Members were told that this report had been published to look at the work that was being done to resolve these problems in order to be transparent.

The Director of Children's Services informed Members that complaints about the admission arrangements had been made and these were being assessed by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. Members were told that the Council was willing to accept alternative solutions that may be put forward by the Adjudicator, as it was felt that the solutions currently being put forward would only serve to move disadvantage from families in Oldfield to other wards.

A feasibility study looking at potentially expanding Newlands School had been carried out. Members were told that Sport England would likely object to any expansion as this would take up what was left of the surrounding green space. Extending the school upwards into more storeys was not being recommended as an option as any expansion work in this form would mean each school place was worth £60-70,000, far beyond the recommended £15-18,000 per place. However Members were warned that this may end up being the only viable solution when the Borough Local Plan was taken into consideration, despite the lack of value for money. Other options that had been explored included sharing sports facilities between multiple schools.

Members were informed that a four hectare site had been identified for a new school on the Maidenhead Golf Club development. However the best option for the site was undecided. Options included relocating Newlands School to the site; creating a new mixed comprehensive school; creating a new single-sex school; or creation of a Free School. The Director of Children's Services said that a trend was starting to emerge in certain communities of favouring a single sex secondary school; however creating a new single sex school had the potential to create a gender imbalance at the existing co-ed schools.

The Panel was told that the report had been circulated to the governors at Newlands School and they were in agreement with its contents. The Panel was also told that there was no desire to change the school's admissions criteria, as it was felt that doing so would cause greater disadvantage to residents of the Royal Borough. The issues of parental choice of school, growth of basic need, and limited school capacity were having to be considered when trying to come up with a workable solution.

The Director of Children's Services informed Members that the next stage would come after the 2017/18 birth figures were known in September, as this would allow Officers to start forecasting possible school trends. However it was unlikely that a solution to the issues highlighted in the report would be made by then.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Panel noted the report and awaited the outcome of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator and feasibility work.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Children’s Services stated that there were no proposals to review the Home to School Transport Post 16 Policy in the next quarter, so at present there were no plans to have any discussions on this at Panel. Regarding the AfC Annual Performance Review, Members were informed that this would come to Panel after August 1st, as this marked a year since the transfer of services to AfC. The update on Children’s Centres Provisions would be scheduled for later in the year.

Regarding Alternative Provision, the Director of Children’s Services informed Members that Haybrook College in Slough had recently won the tendering process to provide the Royal Borough’s Pupil Referral Unit for the next three years, beginning in September 2018. It had therefore been agreed that a report on Alternative Provision written by Alison Crossick would come to Panel after the new arrangements had had time to bed in.

The Clerk informed Members that a new item had been added to the Cabinet Forward Plan earlier in the day regarding Primary School places in Ascot at Cheapside C of E School. The Director of Children’s Services reminded Members that last year the Council had taken the unusual step to expand capacity at the school in all seven year groups, which had left the school with cashflow problems. The report would therefore be asking Cabinet to recommend a credit facility for the school in order for them to overcome this.

The meeting, which began at 6.35 pm, finished at 7.38 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....