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CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 22 MARCH 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Edward Wilson, David Evans (Chairman), Charles Hollingsworth (Vice-Chairman), Lynne Jones, Ross McWilliams, Marion Mills and Wesley Richards

Also in attendance: Councillor N Airey and Bicknell

Officers: Edmund Bradley, Kevin McDaniel, Hilary Hall, Anna Trott, Alison Alexander and David Cook.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence were received. Councillor McWilliams had reported he would be late.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2016 were approved as a true and correct record.

STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN ROYAL BOROUGH SCHOOLS - A REVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/15

The Panel considered the report that examined education performance data from the academic year 2014-15. The report contained analysis against performance of schools in England and year on year performance analysis.

Kevin McDaniel explained the results were from children who had sat examinations in the summer of 2015. As a whole local children achieved well with high standards of attainment compared to national averages across all age groups. Due to a change in the way early years were assessed there had been a slight dip in early years foundation results as they got used to the new criteria.

The Panel were informed that although performance had maintaining its comparable level of attainment the borough's local authority ranking had fallen compared to the other authorities in England. 79% of schools were judged to be Good or Outstanding by Ofsted, lower than the national average of 84%, so there was still work required to improve performance.

One of the challenges identified was the need to support disadvantaged children. Although the data showed that children eligible for free school meals did better at GCSE in the borough than the national average with Charters, Desborough College and Newlands Girls' doing at least 15% better, there were areas where performance was below this and challenge was required.

Chart 3 showed that in primary and middle schools the success of children eligible for free school meals in their SAT tests was lower in the borough than in many other boroughs in England.

A level performance had dipped with less pupils taking 3 A levels, however Newlands Girls School had been successful with a good range of A level, BCA and vocational courses.

The Panel requested that when the Education White Paper was consulted upon the boroughs response be brought to scrutiny before submission.

The Panel felt that the lead Member should explain to Cabinet how attainment 8 was calculated, they also felt it was important to explain to the public that there would be a period of transition as schools move to academies and MATS.

It was noted that the three tier system did not seem to be performing as well as the two tier system and it was questioned how the borough compared in respect to this area to others. The Panel were informed that officers had not seen their data in full but it was known that each transition did have an impact performance, however by the end of the journey performance levels were back up.

(Cllr McWilliams joined the meeting)

The report showed that there was still more work to be done on attainment levels and the Panel felt that there should be specific focus on narrowing the attainment gap for pupils receiving free school meals.

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

RBWM TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME 2015-18: AN AGILE COUNCIL

The Panel considered the report going to Cabinet on the RBWM Transformation Programme (strategy) 2015-18.

The Managing Director explained the strategy built on past achievements and was required as nationally the way local government was funded and worked was changing. The refreshed RBWM Transformation Programme was designed to respond to these changes

By 2018 the council was expected to be more self-reliant, equipped to work in new ways, quicker to respond and providing a mixed economy of service provision. Through the FSR process the council would be able to understand opportunities and then improve its ability to implement changes in short timescales.

The three key areas of the strategy were noted as:

- Knowing our services
- Having the right people a tools
- Delivering differently

It was noted that what this would mean for Children's Services was an agenda item due to be discussed under PartII.

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

FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Panel considered the report that provided an update on the Council's financial performance with services currently projecting a £281k underspend. However due to four non-service variances totalling £262k there is a net underspend of £543k on the General Fund.

With regards to the Children's Directorate there were reporting a projected year-end underspend of £12k against the net controllable budget of £17.9m, a movement of £37k on the £49k underspend reported to Cabinet in February. This increase mainly come from a further increase of £40k in the projected outturn for home to school transport.

Cllr E Wilson questioned why Windsor Boys had received £10k for repairs to a bike shed and was informed by Cllr N Airey that this was an exception to the rule as a repair was required and the contractor responsible no longer existed.

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 9.15 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....

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