

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

MEETING, 5TH DECEMBER, 2018

Present – Councillors Shaikh (Chairman), Murray (Vice-Chairman), Ayub, Bagnall, Dean, Flitcroft, Gillies, Ibrahim, Morris, Parkinson, Swarbrick, Warren, C. Wild and P. Wild (as deputy for Councillor Kirk-Robinson).

Also in attendance

Councillor Cunliffe	- Executive Cabinet Member – Children
Ms B. Brown	- Interim Director of People
Mr T. Birch	- Assistant Director of People – Education and Learning
Mr P. McCann	- Assistant Director, Staying Safe
Mr P. Rankin	- Assistant Director of People, Performance, Planning and Resources
Mr A. Crook	- Assistant Director of People, Commissioning and Integration
Ms J. Bibby	- Head of Safeguarding
Ms M. Wallace-Bannon	- Acting Virtual Head
Ms J. Robinson	- Start Well – Strategic Lead
Ms K. Smith	- Commissioning Manager - Children
Ms S. Morse	- Principal School Improvement Professional
Mrs. S. Bailey	- Principal Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Gibbon, Irving and Kirk-Robinson.

Councillor Shaikh in the Chair.

18. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved - The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 8th October, 2018 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

19. THE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Borough Solicitor submitted a report which put forward the Work Programme for the Committee for the current Municipal Year which had been formulated following the workshop session that had taken place at the meeting in June, 2018.

Resolved – That the 2018/19 work programme, as now submitted, be approved.

20. SAFEGUARDING – INSPECTING LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr P. McCann gave a presentation on the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services Framework.

The presentation outlined how the Framework operated and assisted in improving and monitoring Children's Services.

The Framework improved the impact of Early Help Services by:

- Early help review;
- Multi-agency training offer; and
- Measuring impact.

The Framework also supported children and families affected by domestic abuse and neglect by:

- assessment and care planning;
- work with perpetrators;

- early intervention with families; and
- outcome measures.

The inspection process also assisted in monitoring permanence planning for children in long-term foster care and placed with parents:

- revocation of Care Orders;
- tracking process; and
- Permanence Panel.

Transition planning for children with a disability as they approached adulthood:

- children with disabilities review;
- short break provision; and
- Adult and Children Services working together with transition plans.

The presentation also outlined the use of audits to evaluate the impact of practice in improving children's outcomes:

- Principal Social Worker appointed;
- research in practice;
- reflective supervision; and
- quality assessment and audit activity.

Following the presentation, members made a number of comments as part of their deliberations:

- the importance of engaging with perpetrators – it was acknowledged that this was a challenging area with reducing funding, however work was ongoing in this area and was particularly focused on networking with other services and agencies to assist;
- the difficulties facing elected members in accessing information about particular cases where children had been taken into the care of the Authority and where parents were seeking their help and advice – it was explained that the role of the Elected Member as corporate parent was highly valued, however, the

Authority was often limited in the information it was able to provide as a result of GDPR regulations;

- concerns that children could suddenly be taken into the care of the Authority and the stress and anxiety that this could cause to parents – it was explained that this was a rare occurrence in Bolton and that a recent Ofsted inspection demonstrated that all decisions to take children into care had been justified;
- the importance of informing Elected Members of the outcomes of children taken into care;
- the effects of the Early Help Review – it was explained that the impact of the new system could not be measured immediately and that the benefits would take time to develop following its introduction but that these would be reported back to this Committee in due course;
- although the Authority was making progress, there was always room for improvement; and
- it was important to track the journey of young people in long-term foster care – it was reported that progress was monitored by Independent Review Officers who talked to the children so they could fully understand their situation and ensure they were on the right course for their needs.

Following the presentation and discussions, the Committee felt that it would be useful for all Councillors to receive up to date training on Safeguarding and the role of Elected Members as the Corporate Parent.

Resolved – (i) That Mr McCann be thanked for his informative presentation.

(ii) That a training session be arranged in due course, for all Elected Members, on Safeguarding Issues and Corporate Parenting.

21. INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS

Mr T. Birch gave a presentation on the Local Authority Inspection of Schools.

The presentation provided various statistical analysis regarding primary and secondary schools and their percentage performances as at November, 2018, namely:

- primary schools judged good or better;
- pupils attending good or better primary schools;
- good or better primary schools; and
- good or better secondary schools.

In addition, members were also provided with statistics that gave a snapshot on the provision for children under five years of age as at December, 2018. These revealed that:

- Bolton was above England's rating for the percentage of funded two-year old children in good or better early education provision by 3%; and
- 98% of Bolton's three and four year olds attended good and outstanding settings compared to 93% nationally;

Other Ofsted data was also provided relating to childcare on non-domestic premises and childminders which in Bolton were good or better (96% and 95% respectively).

The presentation also focused on developments in inspection, as follows:

- a new Ofsted Framework for 2019 was being devised;
- according to Ofsted, the changes would move Ofsted's focus away from headline data to look instead at how schools were achieving these results, and whether they were offering a curriculum that was broad, rich and deep or simply teaching to the test; and
- under quality of education, 3 different aspects would be examined:
 - first the intent – what it is that schools want for all their children
 - then the implementation – how is teaching and assessment fulfilling the intent; and
 - finally, the impact – that is the results and wider outcomes that children achieve and the destinations that they go on to.

Following the presentation, members made a number of comments:

- it would be useful to have comparable information from statistical neighbours;
- ongoing pressures on school places and the logistical difficulties placed on parents to take their children to schools further afield;
- the potential for a review of the admissions criteria to ease burdens on schools and parents and to reflect new situations within families;
- the importance of including all families in consultations;
- the Ofsted Framework was gradually becoming more demanding and it was becoming more difficult to achieve higher standards – despite this, Bolton was still achieving.

Mr Birch advised that there was a plan in place to expand a number of schools and proposals in this regard would be submitted to the Executive Member for Schools in January, 2019 for consideration.

Resolved – (i) That Mr Birch be thanked for his informative presentation;
(ii) That comparable statistical performance information from neighbouring authorities be forwarded to members of the Committee; and
(iii) That information on the impact of the new Ofsted Framework for 2019 (the results and wider outcomes that children achieve and the destinations that they go on to) be submitted to this Committee in due course.

22. BOLTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Ms M. Wallace-Bannon gave a presentation on the role and function of the Bolton Virtual School.

Members were informed that Bolton's virtual school was in place to improve educational outcomes for children who were under the care of Bolton. It worked alongside schools to oversee each child's education by way of Pupil Premium Grant and Personal Education Plans.

The presentation went on to outline the School's Vision which included:

- each young person would be supported to achieve the best they can in education;
- education would be a priority in all permanence planning; Continuing to strive to have robust and effective systems that would support educational outcomes; Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 results would be collated every academic year to map expected achievement; and
- the use of the Pupil Premium Grant in an effective way to promote academic achievement.

Following the presentation, members made number of comments/observations:

- the importance of keeping a track on the progress of children who were attending virtual schools out of the Borough – members were advised that children placed out of Borough would have a Personal Education Plan to assist with their learning and monitoring and various other processes were in place designed to collect data, monitor progress and gather attendance figures together with an annual review to ensure their needs were being met;
- it would be useful to have information comparing the performance of Looked after Children in virtual schools and those in mainstream education – it was reported that exam results from children attending virtual schools were available and there were various reasons why they may be lower;
- the importance of transition arrangements to ensure there were good life skills taught in the schools so the children were equipped for changes;

- it would be useful to know the average time a child spent at a virtual school and the possible development of post 16 virtual provision – at present there was ongoing support up to 25 although they had to be accessed; and
- the need to provide meaningful opportunities and ensure the development of a culture of self-worth and progression; and
- the need to report to school governors and other stakeholders on the progress made by children in virtual schools.

Following the presentation and discussions, members acknowledged the significant progress that Bolton had made in terms of Looked after Children and the good results being achieved.

Resolved – That Ms Wallace-Bannon be thanked for her informative presentation.

23. BOLTON YOUNG CARERS PATHWAY

Ms J. Bibby and Ms C. Smith gave a presentation which outlined the main aims and objectives of the Bolton Young Carers Pathway.

The main purpose of the Pathway was to:

- reduce caring responsibilities for all young carers in Bolton, so that no young carer in Bolton would be prevented from reaching their full potential because of their caring responsibilities; and
- young carers and those that they cared for benefitted from the appropriate support that they needed.

The main objectives were to enable young carers to:

- have a life outside their caring role;
- be treated as individuals – at all times with respect and dignity;
- their rights recognised, respected and promoted;

- feel involved and empowered – child's voice is heard and paramount;
- feel assured – that any caring roles that they were relieved of were being dealt with appropriately;
- feel informed – through having access to information, advice and support;
- feel supported – to stay physically and mentally well;
- have access to a range of support across universal services and a range of professionals – that they could access easily; and
- have people to talk to – either in or out of school.

The presentation went on to outline the partnership working and governance arrangements in place together with the roles of the Bolton Carers Partnership Board and Group. Details of the varied membership were also provided.

Members were also informed of the Early Assessment Process which included assessment and referral, targeted support services and information, advice and guidance.

The importance of working together as part of the Bolton Family was also stressed together with an emphasis on receiving the right support at the right time. This would involve a collaborative approach involving key agencies across health, education, adult social care, mental health providers, universal services and voluntary organisations.

The report also described awareness raising in terms of education, health, social care services and assisting with education, triage and referral and universal, targeted and specialist support.

The presentation went on to outline the commissioning intentions; as follows:

- Phase 1 – pathway development and capacity building (November, 2018 – April, 2019); and
- Phase 2 – service coordination and delivery (April, 2019 onwards).

Activity included in Phase 1 was summarised and included:

- Raising awareness;
- Developing an information and briefing pack for stakeholders;
- Developing an assessment tool kit;
- Development of the Young Carers Pathway;
- Workforce development;
- Work with schools;
- Young carers event 2019; and
- Informing the Young Carers Strategy.

Following the presentation, members discussed the issues and made a number of comments, as follows:

- it would be useful to know the actual numbers of young carers in Bolton although it was acknowledged that this was difficult to ascertain for various reasons, particularly as many young carers did not wish to be identified;
- it was noted that although the young carers survey had provided an indication of the numbers of young carers, it was hoped that the new Pathway would help to identify more accurate figures;
- it would be useful for Elected Members to know the number of young carers in each Ward so they could better understand the issues;
- the potential use of GPs to gather information from families about possible young carers and a joined-up approach with other stakeholders, voluntary groups and charities;
- the potential to use psychometric testing to identify potential young carers;
- the need to encourage young carers to seek help and support; and
- the potential for extending virtual schools to young carers who were missing school.

Resolved – That Ms Bibby and Ms Smith be thanked for their informative presentation.

24. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT QUARTER TWO 2018/19

The Interim Director of People and Director of Corporate Resources submitted a joint report which provided information relating to the financial position for Children's Services as at Quarter Two of the 2018/19 Financial Year.

With regard to revenue expenditure, the revenue outturn position for the Local Authority block was expected to be in line with budget following the use of reserves of £5.057m.

Revenue expenditure for the Dedicated Schools Grant was projected to be £1.2m greater than the grant available.

With regard to Capital Expenditure, the report advised that the original Capital Programme approved at Council in February, 2018 totalled £38.3m. The Programme had now decreased to £20m due to likely slippage into 2019/20 as the phasing of projects took place. Expenditure at Quarter Two was £9.2m.

Reserves, including schools, were expected to be £45.3m at 31st March, 2019 which was a decrease of £12.3m due to the use of schools' balances, funding of the current year's Capital Programme and the estimated revenue position being offset by Schools Capital in year allocations.

Resolved – That the report be noted and that updated figures be sent to the Committee.

25. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT – QUARTER TWO 2018/19

The Interim Director of People submitted a report which gave an update on the latest available 2018/19 performance information for the Children's Services section of the People Department.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

26. MEMBERS BUSINESS

The Committee received the extracts of minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:-

- the Executive Cabinet Member – Children’s Portfolio held on 8th October and 5th November, 2018 ; and
- the Children’s PDG (joint meeting with Adults PDG) held on 14th November, 2018.

Resolved – That the minutes of the various meetings be noted.

(The meeting started at 5.00pm and finished at 6.45pm)

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NOTES