

CHILDREN'S AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 8TH OCTOBER, 2014

Present – Councillors Wild (Vice-Chairman), Hall, Hayes (as deputy for Councillor Swarbrick), Mistry, Murray, Shaw, Spencer, Sherrington and Watters.

Co-opted Members

Mr S. Dunne – Representative of Primary Parent Governors
Ms M. Raja – Representative of Secondary Parent Governors

Also in Attendance

Councillor Mrs Thomas	-	Executive Cabinet Member Deputy Leader
Councillor McKeon	-	Executive Member for Education and Schools
Councillor J. Byrne	-	Executive Member for Culture and Youth
Ms. M. Asquith	-	Director of Children's and Adult Services
Mr J. Rowlands	-	Assistant Director – Customer Services
Mr J. Daly	-	Assistant Director of Children's and Adult Services
Mr T. Birch	-	Assistant Director of Children's and Adult Services
Ms J. Angus	-	Staying Safe Management Team
Ms S. Gatenby	-	Staying Safe Management Team
Ms T. Ashton	-	Operations Manager – Sport and Active Living
Mrs. S. Bailey	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ashcroft (Chairman), Jones, Richardson and Swarbrick

Councillor Wild in the Chair.

13. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Children's and Culture Scrutiny Committee held on 20th August, 2014 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be received and signed as a correct record.

14. MONITORING OF DECISIONS

The Director of Chief Executive's Department submitted a report which detailed the progress of decisions taken at previous meetings of this Committee

Resolved - That the position be noted.

15. THE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report which set out details of the updated work programme for the Committee for the current Municipal Year, which had been formulated following the workshop session at the previous meeting.

Resolved – That the updated work programme be approved.

16. ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS – IMPLICATIONS

Mr T. Birch gave a presentation which outlined the main implications of the increase in Free Schools and Academies in Bolton.

Members were informed that by September, 215, there would be 4 secondary academies, 9 primary academies, 1 secondary free school and 2 primary free schools in the Borough.

The presentation went to outline the process by which the Local Authority would continue to maintain a supportive and challenging relationship with all schools and monitor performance. Members were also advised of the arrangements in place for those bodies that chose not to take this offer. In this instance, an annual visit to the Academy or Free School would be undertaken to identify productive opportunities for engagement and consideration of:

- internal pupil performance data
- School Improvement Plan;
- Ofsted judgements based on current self-evaluation; and
- external evaluative reports.

If pupil performance raised concerns, the Local Authority would advise access to additional support and challenge. If performance did not improve, the Local Authority could refer the matter to Ofsted or DfE.

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

- concerns about where the funding for the challenges and inspections would come from if schools decided not to buy the Local Authority's services - it was noted that monies for such would be provided by Central Government;
- concerns that the Local Authority had not received full guidance about measures that could be taken if schools out of its control were not performing; and
- there did not appear to be any evidence to demonstrate that Academies and Free Schools achieved higher standards than Local Authority Controlled schools.

Resolved – That Mr Birch be thanked for his informative presentation and that the Committee receives an update report in 12 months.

17. SAFEGUARDING REPORT

Ms J. Angus and Ms S. Gatenby gave a presentation which updated members on the latest position in terms of safeguarding children in Bolton.

The presentation focused on:

- current trends and numbers of children with a protection plan – most up to date figures showed that Bolton had 354 children with a Child Protection Plan ;
- the introduction of measures to help reduce the length of time children were required to stay on protection plans;
- the increasing number of referrals from agencies;
- rate of referral per 10,000 children throughout north west authorities and England; and
- the rate of re-referrals which was low in Bolton/

The presentation also referred to recent Adoption performance in Bolton and throughout the North West. In 2013/14, Bolton had the highest percentage of good performance in England (35%), with the percentages based on the number of children who ceased to be looked after during the year who were adopted.

The presentation went on to outline the measures that had been put in place within Bolton to address Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Particular reference was made to:

- the formation of an EXIT team in 2009 to prevent CSE, protect children from sexual exploitation and assist in prosecution;
- integration with Greater Manchester Police in 2013 to form the Phoenix/EXIT Team: and
- the integrated team focused on support for victims of CSE and disrupting the activities of those exploiting young people which it was hoped would increase the likelihood of prosecutions.

With regard to missing from home, the presentation outlined the measures that had been put in place to meet national

statutory guidance which had been published in 2013/14. This included the establishment of the multi-agency Sexually Exploited and Missing Group in 2013 which coordinated action plans for children who were at risk of CSE and/or went missing from home, school and care. Establishment of the Group had resulted in more accurate data being shared and children at risk identified.

Finally, the presentation outlined the Bolton Safeguarding Children's Board priorities for 2014/15 which included:

- launch of Early Help;
- re-launch and embed of the revised Framework for Action;
- to monitor and evaluate effectiveness and process of services targeted at CSE and SEAM;
- launch of Domestic Abuse handbook;
- response to OFSTED inspection recommendations
- development of a robust quality assurance and audit framework; and
- embed processes that ensure learning from Serious Care Reviews and Learning Lessons Reviews.

Following the presentation, members of the Committee made the following comments:

- it was important to engage with schools on CSE and make young children aware of the issues – Ms Gatenby advised members of the It's Not Ok campaign where the Exit Group engaged with young people in schools; and
- that the performance and results achieved by the Adoption Team in Bolton were excellent.

Resolved – That Ms Angus and Ms Gatenby be thanked for their informative presentation.

18. CULTURAL OFFER TO COMMUNITIES

Mr J. Rowlands attended the meeting and gave a presentation which provided details of the Cultural Offers made available to communities by the Library and Museum Services.

Members were advised that the Cultural Offer to communities was part of Bolton's Vision Strategy and aimed to improve the lives of the community by securing economic prosperity and narrowing the gap.

There were 6 priority themes which contributed to the Vision, namely:

- prosperous – supporting the Town Centre offer, information provision, digital provision and support and learning and skills;
- health and wellbeing – books on prescription, on line health resources, health promotions, dementia support, mental health initiatives, social care library, disability consultation and Macmillan cancer support;
- children and young people – reading and literacy, events and activities, work with schools, early years and young people;
- clean and green – Chadwick Resource Centre, recycling, green spaces and lending books;
- safe – community space, partnership working and neighbourhood book collections; and
- stronger – programme of events and activities, archive and local history collections, volunteering opportunities and partnership working.

Various examples of initiatives and projects that had been organised and offered were provided in the presentation.

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

- it would be useful to have an information exchange network involving health partners where issues could be shared and potential problems identified; and
- the Council's website could have a link specifically aimed at children where events advertised are available for them to view and decide whether they would like to attend.

Resolved – That Mr Rowlands be thanked for his informative presentation.

19. INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN SPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

Ms T. Ashton attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the initiatives and measures put in place by the Authority in order to increase participation in sports for people with a disability.

By way of background information, members were informed that increasing participation in sport for people with a disability was part of a national and regional agenda. This involved increasing participation in sport by disabled people, increasing the satisfaction of disabled people in sport, increasing the number of opportunities for people with a disability, building stronger working relationships, improving communication and marketing and workforce development.

By way of statistics, the report advised that:

- 23,965 people were registered with a disability or long term health problems in Bolton;
- 853 of those were young people aged under the age of 19;
- 179 young people with a disability in mainstream education; and
- 11 sports clubs in Bolton were Disability specific (207 clubs registered with BC); and
- 101 clubs were registered as Inclusive.

The local agenda had been set to reflect the National and Regional priorities by:

- Increasing the opportunities for people with a disability to take part in sport at whatever level;
- Ensuring facilities were adequate;
- Education and working with clubs to become inclusive;
- Working with special and mainstream schools to ensure there was a sports offer in schools;

- Creating a talent pathway;
- Creating more inclusive events;
- Developing a strategic lead for disability sport in Bolton;
- Developing an inclusive workforce; and developing an inclusive club model.

The presentation went on to outline the facilities offered as part of the Leisure Trust and examples of good news stories.

The presentation then went on to highlight future priorities which in summary included:

- Secure funding to continue the fulltime disability officer post;
- Embed the inclusive module in to all Bolton mark clubs;
- Work with NGB's to pilot the inclusive module in to club mark clubs;
- Work with BDSA to develop a strategic direction for 2014/15;
- Develop a fully inclusive events programme ;
- Develop a delivery plan to target young people with a disability in mainstream schools;
- Develop an effective marketing system; and
- Develop an in school coaching offer for special schools.

Following the presentation, members enquired about how people who did not have physical disabilities were assessed for their needs. Ms Ashton advised that an exercise to establish the requirements of a person was undertaken to assess their needs which was known as a page profile.

Resolved – That Ms Ashton be thanked for her informative presentation.

20. MEMBERS BUSINESS

The Committee was informed that a question had been submitted by the Chairman, Councillor Ashcroft, for consideration under Standing Order 36, viz:-

Question:

In light of the recent report about child sexual abuse in Rotherham and the subsequent criticism levelled at the Local Authority and police, can officers please confirm that they are satisfied that this sort of activity is not prevalent in Bolton.

In addition, it is requested that a full report is brought to this Committee outlining what policies and procedures are in place in Bolton to ensure that some of the most vulnerable children in our society are protected and kept safe and give assurances that any incidences of organised child grooming will be investigated and acted upon, without fail, to ensure that victims voices are heard irrespective of who the alleged perpetrators are.

Answer:

Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a longstanding priority in Bolton. The Exit team is a specialist team which focuses on the prevention of CSE, protection of children from CSE and the disruption and prosecution of offenders. The team was established in January 2009 and in December 2013, a significant increase in police resources was put in place and the team relocated to a new base at Brightmet House. The team now comprises of a Children's Services Team Manager, 1 Social Worker, 3 Support Workers, an Administrator, a Detective Sergeant, 3 Detectives, 1 Force Intelligence Analyst and a Missing from Home Co-ordinator. Specialist Young People's Health Services are also linked to the team. The increased capacity in the team has improved the level of intelligence available and quality of information sharing in relation to predatory adults and has enabled a significantly increased focus on targeted disruption activity. There has been no evidence to date to suggest that there is any organised element to CSE in Bolton. Agencies in Bolton are fully committed to ensuring that perpetrators of CSE are prosecuted and dealt with appropriately by the courts. The most recent CSE case to be put before the courts in Bolton resulted in a custodial sentence of six and a half years. Members of the Scrutiny Committee can be reassured that all CSE in Bolton is

very vigorously investigated and, if any organised CSE were to be identified, a similarly robust standard of investigation would be undertaken. All CSE is thoroughly investigated in Bolton, irrespective of any issues relating to the circumstances or backgrounds of perpetrators.

CSE has been an ongoing priority for the Bolton Safeguarding Children Board for a number of years. The board and its constituent partners take the issue of CSE in Bolton very seriously and have a longstanding commitment to continuously improving the protection of children at risk of CSE in Bolton. A detailed report will be provided to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved – That the question submitted and the response provided be noted, and that a report on the policies and procedures in place in Bolton to ensure that some of the most vulnerable children in our society are protected, be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

(The meeting started at 5.00pm and finished at 6.40 pm)