

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

MEETING, 25TH JULY, 2023

Present – Councillors Grant (Chairman), Rigby (Vice-Chairman), Barnard, Fielding (as deputy for Councillor Morrisey), Flitcroft, Galloway, Alaina Khan, Amjid Khan, Livesey, Maher, Meehan, Morris (as deputy for Councillor Hon), Mort, Patel, Priest, Shaikh and Taylor-Burke

Co-Opted Members

None

Also in attendance

- | | | |
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| Councillor Donaghy | - | Executive Cabinet Member – Children's Services |
| Mr P. Rankin | - | Deputy Director of Children's Services |
| Ms H. Shearer | - | Head of Start Well Service |
| Mr D. Rice | - | Operations Manager/Lead – Holiday Activities and Food |
| Ms T. Minshull | - | Assistant Director - Social Care and Public Health Commissioning |
| Mrs. V. Ridge | - | Democratic Services Manager |

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dean, Hon and Morrisey

Councillor Grant in the Chair

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved – That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 27th March, 2023 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

2. MINUTES OF INFORMAL MEETING

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the informal meeting of the Committee held on 21st June, 2022 were submitted and noted.

3. PROPOSED COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

The Borough Solicitor submitted the proposed Committee Work Programme for 2023/24 which had been formulated following the informal meeting of this Committee held on 21st June, 2023.

If approved, the Programme would guide the work of the Committee over the course of the Municipal Year.

Resolved – That the 2023/24 Committee Work Programme, as now submitted, be approved.

4. HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES FUND AND YOUTH PROVISION

Dominic Rice gave a presentation on the delivery of the Government funded Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) in Bolton.

The Programme was funded by the DfE and coordinated by the Youth and Play Service and led by a multi-agency steering group. It involved enriching activity and a nutritious meal for primary and secondary age children who were eligible for and receiving benefits related school meals during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays.

Bolton's annual allocation up to 2024 was approximately £1.4m and covered 12,500 plus eligible children, although not all were expected to participate. The Programme was closely monitored

by the DfE and required a minimum of 85% Free School Meal eligibility. 15% could be used for other vulnerable young people.

The presentation outlined the delivery method using five strands:

- the Local Authority Offer;
- the Commissioned Offer- using the third sector;
- local private businesses;
- the Food Support Offer; and
- the Programme Support Offer.

Bolton's HAF 2022 Programme was successful with over 10,000 unique eligible individuals attending provision over the year.

The presentation also outlined the role and function of the Authority's Youth and Play Service which involved 10 young people centres with 26 play sessions, 8 junior clubs, 20 youth sessions per week and offered additional sessions that were funded by grants, elected members and other services.

Following the presentation, members made the undermentioned comments:

- the constraints of the strict eligibility criteria imposed by the DfE on delivery of the Programme; and
- it was acknowledged that not everyone who was eligible for the offer would take it up, although it was hoped to build on the success of last year and increase numbers.

Resolved – That Dominic Rice be thanked for his informative presentation.

5. FAMILY HUBS

Paul Rankin and Helen Shearer gave a presentation on Family Hubs, the associated funding and how it would be utilised in Bolton.

Members were advised that the Government had committed £301.75m for 75 upper tier authorities to deliver start for life and family help services over the next three financial years.

The package contained funding for the following components:

- £81.75 - to create a network of family hubs
- £10m - to publish Start for Life offer
- £50m - for parenting programmes
- £100m - for infant-parent mental health support
- £50m - for breastfeeding support
- £10m - for workforce pilots in small number of local authorities.

An additional sum of £24m had also been allocated for HLE Recovery programmes.

Members were informed that family hubs were a way of delivering the National Supporting Families Vision of an effective Early Help system. They also provided a single access point to a range of services for families such as universal and early help and involved co-location of services and professionals.

A Family Hubs Vision Workshop had taken place in October with the Children and Young People's Board to identify how the programme would work in Bolton. The board vision was that the Family Hub network would reset and redefine how all organisations worked with children and families in Bolton.

The presentation went on to outline how the Family Hubs and Start for Life offer would operate in Bolton together with the system approach:

- delivered through the Children and Young People's Board which included representation from the Local Authority, Health, Education, Voluntary Sector, Parents and Carers;
- delivery would be coordinated in neighbourhoods and designed with families;

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- Bolton Start Well Centres would be renamed Family Hubs;
- the Family Hub network will include schools, libraries, youth centres, parks, GP's surgeries and health centres
- there would be a joined up information offer for all services to families in Bolton; and
- the Programme would link to wider health integration and the Bolton response to the cost-of-living crisis.

Full details of the funding arrangements, provisional allocations and financial implications associated with the Programme were provided. It was noted that funding could not be used to deliver existing services.

A full list of the services that would be expected to be offered at the Hubs, through the Hub network or virtually was also provided together with details of the delivery and funding approach. The activities and funding by Bolton Council (£1.8m for 2022-25) and Bolton NHS Foundation Trust (£730k) were highlighted.

The next steps involved –

- recruitment to teams and coordinate approach to programme delivery;
- redesignate Start Well Centres as Family Hubs with soft launch in Autumn;
- invitation to professionals and the community to help define the offer at each hub and in the local network using data led approach;
- creation of Family Hubs branding;
- progress reconfiguration of Family Hubs estate; and
- continue to develop the Family Hub Network.

Following the presentation, members made various comments:

- the funding arrangements for year two – members were advised that the second year of funding had been secured after meeting the deadlines and requirements of the DfE although some of the first-year monies had been reallocated to ensure they were fully utilised;

- the reasons why Bolton had chosen not to be included as a Trailblazer authority due to the tight timescales involved;
- how the soft launch of the Hubs in October would ensure that residents were aware of the new offer – Mr Rankin advised that a communication plan was being developed to engage users and promote the new approach;
- the issues and challenges associated with recruitment of lead practitioners – it was hoped to undertake a recruitment event in partnership with other organisations;
- the importance of links between the Hubs and GPs – Mr Rankin advised that communications had already commenced with the GP Federation together with discussions on how Hubs could be utilised to assist GPs in certain areas such as vaccinations; and
- the lack of funding to build new Hubs - Mr Rankin assured members that a system of networks would ensure that areas without a physical Hub building would have access to services.

Resolved – That Paul Rankin and Helen Shearer be thanked for their informative presentation.

6. 0-19 PROVISION

Resolved – That this item be deferred for consideration at the next meeting of this Committee in August, 2023.

7. MEMBERS BUSINESS

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

- the Executive Cabinet Member for Children's Services held on 19th June and 15th July, 2023

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

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 6.45pm)