CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 21ST OCTOBER, 2019

Present – Councillors Cunliffe (Chairman), Ayub, Connor, Dean, Fletcher, Heslop, Ibrahim, Khurram, McGeown, Murray, Newall, Parkinson, Sherrington, Walsh and Weatherby

Co-opted Member

Reverend Canon Dr Bracegirdle – Church of England Diocese Representative

Also in attendance

Councillor C. Wild	-	Executive Cabinet Member – Wellbeing
Ms B. Brown	-	Director of People
Mr P. Rankin	-	Assistant Director, Performance, Planning and Resources
Dr S. Cornwell	-	Head of SEND and Principal Educational Psychologist
Mrs. S. Bailey	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Gibbon

Councillor Cunliffe in the Chair.

10. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved - The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 28th August, 2019 were submitted and signed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor C. Wild in the list of apologies.

11. MONITORING REPORT

The Borough Solicitor submitted a report which monitored the progress of the decisions taken at previous meetings of the Committee.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

12. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Borough Solicitor submitted the Work Programme which had been formulated following the workshop session in June, 2019 and would guide the work of the Committee over the course of the Municipal Year.

It was anticipated that each Scrutiny Meeting would support the key priorities of the Department with progress and effectiveness being monitored throughout the year.

Members noted the importance of receiving all reports and presentations in a timely manner prior to the meeting to enable them to be fully prepared and agreed that all future reports and presentations should be included with the agenda.

Resolved – (i) That the 2019/20 Work programme, as now submitted, be approved.

(ii) That all reports and presentation for future meetings be included with the agenda.

13. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

Ms Brown and Dr Cornwell gave a presentation which provided an overview of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities within Bolton and summarised the outcome of an Inspection in 2016 together with service priorities going forward and the revised SEND Strategy.

The presentation advised members that a SEND Local Area Inspection had taken place in May, 2016. Many positives had

been highlighted and a Written Statement of Action had not been issued. Broader integration with health was the steering direction with stakeholder engagement, transition and eligibility and assessment, including transport.

Current pressures were highlighted which included special school capacity, an increase in requests for and numbers of EHCPs, high needs block overspend, more children with more complex and challenging needs, increased age range of the SEND reforms and more families and young people wanting to remain in education until the age of 25 years and capacity required to drive forward SEND initiatives.

A diagram illustrating the revised SEND Strategy for 2019/2024 was provided together with a list of the following priorities:

- to improve the educational and lifelong outcomes for children and young people with SEND especially those at SEN Support;
- for children and young people in Bolton with SEND to feel part of their local community, feel valued and be welcomed and included in their local mainstream school;
- to ensure that there were sufficient high-quality local provisions and services to meet demand and to meet the needs of the children, young people and families of Bolton;
- for education, health and social care to work together effectively to jointly commission provision and services to meet demand and to meet the needs of the children, young people and families of Bolton;
- to ensure that children with SEND were prepared for adulthood and independence from the earliest years;
- for children, young people, their families (and those working with them) to have access to a comprehensive local offer that celebrated all that Bolton had to offer; and
- to ensure that children and young people and their families were involved and enabled at both the individual and strategic level.

The presentation also went on to discuss primary aged children with Education Health and Care Plans and their attainment. In

Bolton, they compared well to the same cohort nationally. Provisional data for 2019 indicated that at the end of Key Stage 2:

- 6% of children with an EHCP in Bolton attained the expected standard in reading compared to a national average of 4%;
- 4% of children with an EHCP in Bolton met the expected standard in maths in 2019 compared to 3% nationally and 1% in Bolton in 2018; and
- the writing attainment of pupils with an EHCP was now closer to the national average than it was in 2018 with the gap now being 1% instead of 2%.

Attainment of primary children at SEN support remained lower than their peers nationally at the end of the Key Stage 2, however, progress made by this cohort in reading, writing and maths from Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2 was better than their peers nationally.

With regard to secondary EHCP, attainment 8 scores at Key Stage 4 for children with an EHCP were in the second quartile nationally (rank 35) which was better than the cohort of children with no SEN (4th quartile, rank 115) which indicated that secondary school children in Bolton with an EHCP attained well at the end of Key Stage 4 when compared to both the same cohort nationwide and those with no identified SEND in Bolton.

Progress 8 scores for this cohort of children fell into the third quartile nationally (based on 2018 data). Children with an EHCP in Bolton matched the national average progress 8 score of -1.09.

With regard to secondary SEN support attainment, the presentation advised that at the end of Key Stage 4, children at SEN support did not achieve as well as their peers nationally (average attainment 8 score per pupil in Bolton 29.4 vs 30.98 for stat neighbours and 32.2 nationally. This ranked Bolton 116 nationally and in the bottom quartile.

This cohort did not make as much progress as their peers nationally (-0.55 in Bolton vs -0.43 nationally, -0.44 statistical

neighbours and -0.57 North West). However, the rate of progress for this cohort did improve between 2017 (-0.76) and 2018 (-0.55).

The presentation went on to outline current work being undertaken in the area of SEND, including:

- inclusion work/Bolton Family Pledge;
- High Needs Strategic Review Group;
- special school projections;
- reviewing EHCP computer system and panel process;
- transition of young people with SEND into employment/adulthood before they were 25 years old;
- primary SEMH provision; and
- revised SEND Strategy.

Following the presentation, members discussed the issues at length and made a number of comments/observations:

- the arrangements in place to communicate with parents and the effective use of the Voluntary Sector in liaising and coordinating;
- the ongoing work to provide children with skills both personal and work related – a practical example included the Rummies Bistro at Rumworth school;
- the outcome of the Government review of SEND funding and the associated code of practice – members were advised that this was not yet known;
- the ongoing budget pressures to fund SEND with rising numbers and increased demand with no corresponding increase in monies;
- the national shortage of educational psychologists and the inability to recruit which was hindering service delivery – members were advised that two educational psychologists had recently been appointed to assist schools in Bolton;
- the use of trading companies to deliver SEND services in some schools;
- the need for continued liaison with schools to ensure they were aware of their responsibilities – Ms Brown advised that work was ongoing to engage with schools and

develop a strategy in this regard and progress would be reported back to this Committee at a future meeting ;

- the EHCP process – there was a 20-week timescale for completion;
- it would be helpful to have accurate figures on the number of children with EHCPs in mainstream schools;
- the numbers of appeals against EHCP decisions – members were advised that most appeals were settled before they reached tribunal stage as there was a good disagreement resolution service in place - there had been twelve appeals lodged with Tribunal over the last academic year, only one of which had proceeded to a full hearing with the rest being resolved prior to a hearing;
- it would be helpful to have a breakdown on where SEND difficulties were within the Borough and what services were provided by each school – Ms Brown advised that services provided were listed on each school's website;
- high needs overspend – this was currently £9m from the Cumulative Schools Budget and a repayment plan was in place. Close working would continue with the Schools Forum to identify additional funding in an effort to address the deficit;
- schools' contributions towards SEND – members were advised that schools were expected to cover the first £6,000 for SEND pupils and they often struggled to financially fund this – it was difficult for the Authority to assist with this; and
- the involvement of parents in deciding which schools their child attended – members were advised that parents of a child with an EHC Plan could express a preference for a school and that the Authority must comply with that request if it was for a mainstream school unless there were very good reasons for not doing so.

Resolved (i) That Ms Brown and Dr Cornwell be thanked for their informative presentation.

(ii) That an update be provided on the development of a strategy with schools on the provision of SEND.

(iii) That information on the numbers of children with EHCPs in mainstream schools be forwarded to members.

(iv) A breakdown of children with SEND by Ward be provided to members.

14. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT – QUARTER ONE 2019/20

The Director of People submitted a report which provided performance information in respect of the People Department as at Quarter One of 2019/20.

Following consideration of the report, members made the following comments/observations:

Resolved – That the report be noted.

15. MEMBERS BUSINESS

(a) The Committee was informed that a question had been submitted by Councillor Ibrahim for consideration under Standing Order 36, as follows:-

Question:

RSE PDG

At our last Scrutiny there was discussions around the delivery of RSE in schools and setting up of a PDG so that we don't have the problems that other towns have faced.

We need to ensure that parents are fully aware of how and what is being taught. Also, we don't want to end up with parents protesting outside our schools which would disrupt our children's education and lead to a breakdown in parent and staff relationships.

As Chair please can you tell me when the PDG's will be taking place and why has there been a delay.

Answer:

We are in the process of arranging a Children's PDG for the 11th November, 2019 and are in contact with the relevant outside personnel and the Group Leaders about the membership. The delay was due to the fact that the item was originally on the forward plan for the meeting today with a PDG to take place after that. However, due to unavailability of headteachers, the item will now be considered by the Committee at December's meeting.

Following consideration of the answer, members went on to discuss the proposed PDG and the possible involvement of external representatives. The Borough Solicitor advised that constitutionally, the meeting should consist of elected members only with external representatives being invited in an advisory capacity.

A motion was then moved and seconded that the PDG meeting on 11th November, 2019 should take place, when the voting was as follows:

For the motion:

Councillors Ayub, Connor, Cunliffe, Dean, Fletcher, Heslop, Ibrahim, Khurram, McGeown, Newall, Parkinson, Walsh, Weatherby and Rev. Canon Bracegirdle.

Against the motion:

Councillor Murray

The motion was then declared carried.

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

- the Executive Cabinet Member – Children's Portfolio held on 19th August, 9th September and 7th October, 2019

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

16. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved – That, under Section (100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in paragraph 3 (financial and business affairs) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act; and that it be deemed that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in its exemption outweighs the public interest in its disclosure.

17. PUPIL PLACE PRESSURES – UPDATE

Further to Minute 7 of the meeting of this Committee held on 28th August, 2019, the Director of People gave a verbal update on the current situation regarding pupil place pressures and on the outcome of the meeting with the DfE held on 4th September, 2019 to discuss the Authority's school expansion plans.

Resolved – That the update be noted and that the Committee be kept informed of future developments.

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 7.30pm)

N O T E S