

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

MEETING, 28TH AUGUST, 2019

Present – Councillors Cunliffe (Chairman), Brady (Vice-Chairman), Bullock (as deputy for Councillor Dean), Connor, Cunliffe, Fletcher, Gibbon, Heslop, Ibrahim, McGeown, Murray, Newall, Parkinson, Sherrington and Walsh

Co-opted Member

Reverend Canon Dr Bracegirdle – Church of England Diocese Representative

Also in attendance

Councillor Baines (as deputy for Councillor C. Wild)	-	Executive Cabinet Member – Wellbeing
Ms B. Brown	-	Interim Director of People
Ms S. Alexander	-	Assistant Director of People (Staying Safe)
Mr P. Rankin	-	Assistant Director of People (Performance, Planning and Resources)
Mr G. Kelly	-	Capital Programme Manager, People Services
Mrs. S. Bailey	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dean and Khurram

Councillor Cunliffe in the Chair.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved - The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 24th June, 2019 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

6. PEOPLE PRIORITIES AND COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Ms B. Brown gave a presentation on the role and function of the Scrutiny Committee and gave an update on the areas that the Committee had examined in 2018/19.

The presentation also summarised the priorities for the People Department over the forthcoming year and identified the main issues and pressures facing the Service.

A proposed Work Programme was submitted which had been formulated following the workshop session that had taken place at the meeting in June, 2019. If approved, it 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 agreed the work programme subject to the addition of mental health and inclusion as topics for discussion.

Resolved – That Ms Brown be thanked for her informative presentation and that the 2019/20 work programme, as now amended, be approved.

7. PUPIL PLACE PRESSURES SEPTEMBER 2020

(Councillors Sherrington and Walsh declared interests in the following item of business by virtue of their Chair of Governor appointments at Moorgate Primary School and Smithills and Bolton with Academy Trust respectively)

Mr G. Kelly gave a presentation which updated members on the latest position regarding pupil place pressures in Bolton and projections for the September, 2020 intake which were based on the most recent data.

In relation to projected primary reception intakes to 2023/24, members were advised that demand for future reception places across the Borough was expected to stabilise below capacity as a consequence of a reduction in recent births. However, whilst reception demand was relatively static, the overall demand for a primary school place was expected to continue to rise until September, 2023 but remain within overall capacity. Demand was not evenly distributed however, with central areas in particular expected to experience continued demand for a primary school place.

The presentation went on to outline proposed solutions for primary place pressures which involved the creation of additional places at Gaskell Primary School and Bolton St Catherine's Academy for September, 2019 (225 pupil places) and an additional 70 places at SS Osmund and Andrew RC Primary School for September, 2020. A review of the need to expand Gilnow, Markland Hill and/or Moorgate Primary Schools with up to 105-210 places created, if required, by September, 2020.

With regard to the south of the Borough, members were advised that the DfE had indicated that they were reconsidering the need to open the proposed Great Lever two form entry free school that had been approved in 2016 as they believed that the effects of lower births were no longer driving a need to create additional reception places. However, it was noted that the area continued to experience a high demand for primary school places across all year groups and if the proposed new school did not proceed, the Council would have to consider alternative expansion proposals to meet demand.

A meeting with representatives from the DfE was scheduled to take place on 4th September, 2019 where the issues would be discussed further. Members urged officers to stress the seriousness of the pupil place pressures in Bolton, particularly

in the south of the Borough, and to urge the DfE to support the Authority's expansion proposals.

In relation to secondary pupil projections, the presentation advised that demand for Year 7 admissions into secondary schools would remain high and would exceed available capacity in September, 2020 and beyond without further expansions.

Demand for secondary school places across all year groups would continue to grow and would exceed available capacity without further expansions and/or new schools.

The presentation went on to outline the proposed secondary school expansion plans which involved:

- September, 2017 – expansion of Turton School to create 150 permanent places; temporary expansion of various schools to create 121 intake places – cost of approximately £2.4m from Basic Need funding support;
- September, 2018 – expansion of Canon Slade, Ladybridge, Sharples, St Joseph, Thornleigh and Westhoughton Secondary Schools to create 239 additional Year 7 places and 1,195 permanent places although the proposed expansion of ESSA had been paused by the Regional Schools Commissioner – cost of approximately £15.5m from Basic Need funding support;
- September, 2019 – proposed new 900 place King's Leadership Academy – cost to be met by the ESFA.

With regard to secondary school place demand for September, 2020, members were advised that, based upon current pupil forecast data, 210 additional Year 7 places were required by September, 2020 to meet demand. These could be provided by:

- creating additional capacity at existing schools by way of traditional expansions;

- utilising existing space within schools more effectively ;
and
- exploring opportunities with other educational providers such as the University Technical College to provide Year 7 – 11 provision.

There would be continued dialogue with the DfE and Regional Schools Commissioner as many of the solutions would require their support and approval including funding. A meeting was being held on 4th September, 2019 to discuss such matters.

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

- the transient nature of the school population – Mr Kelly advised that data confirmed that in-year admissions were still increasing in Bolton despite some authorities nationally reporting falling rolls;
- the difficulties encountered by the LEA in trying to plan for the future growth – Mr Kelly confirmed that regulations and funding governing the building of schools meant that any new schools were required to be academies and that the Authority could not require existing academies to expand buildings or numbers – a meeting was being held on 4th September, 2019 with the DfE to discuss this and other such related matters, the outcome of which would be reported back to members;
- the distances that children were required to travel to school and associated implications for families – Mr Kelly explained that these matters would be raised with the DfE at the meeting on 4th September, 2019 with the hope of a positive outcome;
- the potential to review the admissions criteria;
- the monetary issues associated with raising planned admission numbers and the delayed funding gap;
- the need to stress the seriousness of the pupil pressures situation in Bolton to the DfE and urge them to support the plans that the Authority have been working to put in place;

- the need to expand local authority schools rather than rely on the DfE to build academies – Mr Kelly advised that there were now only three local authority community secondary schools and only a small pool of schools that could be practically and effectively expanded either because of their relatively small sites being located in the right geographical location where additional provision was required;
- whether there were similar pressures in other Boroughs – Mr Kelly advised that there were some issues but not to the same level or extent as in Bolton;
- the need to respond to immediate pressures – Ms Brown assured members that plans were in place to address the issues if the outcome of the meeting with the DfE was not favourable; and
- possible future discussions on pupil place pressures at a policy development group.

Resolved – That Mr Kelly be thanked for his informative presentation and that the outcome of the meeting with the DfE to discuss pupil place pressures in Bolton, be reported to members in due course.

8. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT – QUARTER ONE 2019/20

A joint report of the Interim Director of People and the Director of Corporate Resources was submitted which provided information relating to the financial position for the People Directorate for Quarter One of the 2019/20 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 use of reserves of £8.093m.

Revenue expenditure for the Dedicated Schools Grant was projected to be £1.795m greater than the grant available.

In relation to Capital Expenditure, the report advised that the original Capital Programme approved at Council in February 2019 totalled £23.2m. The programme had now decreased to

£22.6m due to reprogramming of schemes resulting in a reduction of £3.34m. Slippage from 2018/19 and new schemes had resulted in an increase of £2.743m. Expenditure at Quarter One was £1.84m.

Reserves were expected to be £26.8m at 31st March 2020. Of the £26.8m reserves, £17.5m related to capital monies held for future work on schools and £4.56m related to schools' balances and other Dedicated Schools Grant reserves.

Following consideration of the report, members referred to the revised efficiency statement which set out the Authority's intentions with regard to fostering and engagement and requested that a copy be sent to all members with potential future discussion on adoption taking place at a Policy Development Group.

Resolved – That the report be noted and that a copy of the revised Sufficiency Statement in relation to the Fostering Service be forwarded to members of this Committee.

9. MEMBERS BUSINESS

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 8th July, 2019

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

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 7.40pm)

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