

Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee

24 September 2020 – At a meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee held at 10.30 am at a virtual meeting with restricted public access.

Present: Cllr Barling (Chairman)

Cllr Lord	Cllr Hillier	Mr Lozzi
Cllr Baldwin	Cllr A Jones	Mr Cristin
Cllr Brunsdon	Cllr Oxlade	Mrs Ryan
Cllr Hall	Cllr Wickremaratchi	

Apologies were received from Cllr Bridges

Absent: Cllr Burgess

Also in attendance: Cllr N Jupp and Cllr Russell

Part I

17. Declarations of Interests

17.1 No declarations of interest were declared.

18. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

18.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2020 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

19. Urgent Matters

19.1 The Chairman asked the Cabinet Member for Education & Skills for an update on the return of children to school. The Cabinet Member said that: -

- Average attendance in west Sussex schools was above 90% (more than the national average)
- There had been some anxiety amongst parents, but confidence was building
- Incidents of Covid amongst staff and pupils was very low at present; two in Early Years/Family Centres, twelve in primary/secondary schools, two in further education settings and none in universities – this was expected to rise

19.2 The Director for Education & Skills added that single school years in four schools had had to isolate with home learning being provided.

20. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

20.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

21. Children First Improvement - Service Update

21.1 The Committee considered a report and presentation by the Executive Director of Children, Young People and Learning (copies appended to the signed minutes). The item was introduced by Jacquie Russell, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People who told the Committee that: -

- The development of Children's Services was accelerating with three new permanent assistant directors joining the service over the next few weeks. This would be supported by some interim staff staying in post to lead on the transformation work, creating a structure that will clearly define people's roles and responsibilities and make them more effective
- A new service model recognised as best practice nationally was being put in place
- A new social worker model was embedding best practice for the new family safeguarding model

21.2 Lucy Butler, Executive Director of Children, Young People and Learning and Vince Clark, Children First Transformation Director talked through a presentation on the Children's Services Transformation programme.

21.3 Summary of responses to committee members' questions and comments: -

- It was anticipated that the new service model would be in place in the next twelve months
- Government decided that a Trust would take responsibility for the delivery of Children's Services in West Sussex – the scope of the Trust was yet to be agreed and would be the subject of a Scrutiny Task & Finish Group and decision by Cabinet on 20 October 2020
- It was possible that at some point the Commissioner might decide that a Trust was not necessary, but until then work towards one had to continue
- The Risk Register could be reviewed to see if educational matters should be included
- The Health & Wellbeing Board was establishing a sub-group to look at Children's Services which would help strengthen partnerships with the Police, NHS and Adults' Services. The Local Safeguarding Children Board work would sit alongside this.
- The Committee could hear the voice of young people by inviting members of the Youth Cabinet to future meetings
- The Service was confident that its leadership team had the capacity to deliver the new practice model

- The current social worker offer has been extended to June 2021, with a revised, more comprehensive offer being developed, which would be progressed through the budget setting process
- The new offer would also provide more opportunities for career progression
- All managers would have access to assistance and development programmes
- Staff engagement sessions had provided positive feedback with a commitment to the new service model, and further formal staff consultation would take place as the model progressed
- The Family Safeguarding Model will include support for parents recognising this as a key area to address to improve outcomes for children

21.4 Resolved that – the Committee: -

- i. Welcomes the service redesign proposals and the very positive direction of travel on the improvement journey and congratulates officers for driving this forward
- ii. Welcomes the extension of the social worker offer and supports the need to explore a broader offer
- iii. Requests continued work to ensure the voice and experiences of children and families at all stages of their engagement with the service are included as the new service model is developed and that the Scrutiny Committee is kept informed
- iv. Recognises that the 'parent capacity for change' is a key part of the Proposed Service Model and that having sufficient resources and capacity in this area will be key to its success. The Committee requests to be kept updated on this work through its Business Planning Group
- v. Supports the continued availability of the Transformation Fund to resource the Improvement Programme

22. Education and Skills Annual Report Task and Finish Group Recommendations

22.1 The Committee considered the Education and Skills Annual Report Task and Finish Group Recommendations, Response from the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and the Draft 2020 Education and Skills Annual Report (copies appended to the signed minutes).

22.1 Paul Wagstaff, Director of Education & Skills told the Committee: -

- A meeting was planned for November to discuss the impact of Covid-19 on pupils
- A key priority for the service was reducing the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their peers – increased capacity and working with the research school would help realise this. The Committee's Business Planning Group would be kept updated on this work. The Cabinet Member for Education & Skills informed the Committee that the report on attainment of disadvantaged children was targeted to be published in December 2020/January 2021

- There would be a thorough analysis across the county to identify variations in achievement and address them

22.3 Resolved – that the Committee notes the Education and Skills Annual Report Task and Finish Group Recommendations, Response from the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and the Draft 2020 Education and Skills Annual Report.

23. Business Planning Group Report

23.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes the Business Planning Group report.

24. Appointments to the Business Planning Group

24.1 As the current Chairman, Cllr Barling, was standing down following the meeting, the new Chairman, Cllr Hillier, would take his place on the Business Planning Group (BPG) and speak to committee members about filling the remaining Conservative and minority group vacancies on the BPG.

25. Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

25.1 The following topics were suggested as possible items for future scrutiny: -

- a. The development of school federations, impact on small schools and how this affects the progress of the school effectiveness strategy
- b. Educational progress and attainment of disadvantaged children and children looked after
- c. Special guardianships – process and how they are monitored

25.2 Resolved – that topics a and b would be considered by the Business Planning Group and that c should be referred to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

26. Date of Next Meeting

26.1 The Committee thanked the outgoing Chairman, Cllr Barling, for his chairmanship of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.38 pm

Chairman