

**David Barling**

Chairman of the Children and Young People's  
Services Scrutiny Committee

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BY EMAIL

Joy Dennis

**Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee**

Dear Joy,

**Feedback to the Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee regarding outstanding issues.**

I write in response to correspondence from the previous Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee, dated 25 March and 24 May 2019, to which I am now able to provide a full response. I apologise for the delay in responding to the Committee's enquiries, but the Business Planning Group has been focussing on the Children First Improvement Plan in its recent meetings. However, I am pleased to now provide you with an update on the following issues.

In regard to Manor Green School, members noted that a decision was taken on 29 October 2019 in which the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills approved the allocation of £1.018m from the Capital Programme to fund the expansion works, the completion of a procurement process for the delivery of works at the school, and delegated authority to award the contract for carrying out the works detailed in the report to the Director of Property and Assets.

Members received an update on the Whole Council Design Programme, and noted that service redesign is a key element of the Children First Programme, fundamental to providing social workers with the organisational conditions that will support improved practice with children. Any planned changes to the design of Children's Services must be cognisant of the Whole Council Design Programme and the interdependencies between these two projects will need to be managed carefully. For change of this scale to be successful it will be important to take a whole systems view in order to create the desired organisational synergies. The BPG will continue to monitor this work at each meeting.

Members also received an update on the poor scores relating to customer service provided by Capita to schools. Members raised concern over this, and noted that as the Capita contract spanned several areas, requested that the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee consider how they would like to scrutinize this in consultation with the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee.

In regard to Elective Home Education, members received a briefing on this. They noted that a government consultation report was awaited by the Council, and asked the Director of Education to write again to urge the Schools Minister to lobby for registration of families who were electively home educating. They also asked for further information on this topic, including the consultation report when available, to be presented to the next BPG meeting.

Members received an update on Alternative Provision and were satisfied with the positive steps that had been taken in this area. They requested a further update at the next BPG in March.

Members considered a detailed briefing on high cost residential placements, due to its importance this item was deferred to the next BPG in order for members to have adequate time to consider the briefing in more detail. The BPG considered this item on 21 February and have agreed that a substantive item be brought to the Committee in September 2020. This has subsequently been added to the Work Programme accordingly.

Your most recent email dated 20 December 2019, regarding education performance statistics, was considered at a meeting of the Business Planning Group on 21 February 2020. A response was issued to you on the same day indicating that this would be considered as part of a wider Education and Skills Annual Report TFG.

With best regards,

David Barling

Chairman, Children and Young Peoples Services Scrutiny Committee