

CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 22 January 2020

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Wendy Meikle (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Linda Holt (Vice-Chair); Councillors Paul Ankers, Laura Clingan, Charles Gibson, Yvonne Guariento, Janet Mobbs, Becky Senior, David Wilson and Lisa Robinson (Parent Governor Representative).

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 18 December 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations of interest were made.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - THIRD QUARTER UPDATE REPORT 2019/20

A joint report of the Director for Children's Services and for Education was submitted (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the Third Quarter Portfolio Performance and Resources Report for the Children, Family Services and Education Portfolio that focussed on highlights and exceptions in delivering the portfolio priorities, reform programmes and other key projects since the Mid-Year Report. It included the latest forecast performance and financial data for the Portfolio, along with an update on the portfolio savings programme.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Family Services & Education (Councillor Colin Foster) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised: -

- Clarification was sought regarding the Portfolio Summary and the reference to the Greater Manchester Care Leavers Charter (GMCLC). In response, it was commented that the GMCLC was an innovation of a series of projects and practices involving Stockport Family and ten Local Authorities to share best practice and learn from each other. It was also to support care leavers, children's homes and foster carers, which resulted in the Charter being developed. A number of steps had already been taken

regarding council tax exemptions, housing and access to health professionals and free prescriptions, but also includes access to employment and employment advice and support for care leavers.

- Clarification was sought relating to Priority 1 and the percentage of Free School Meals eligible children achieving a “good level of development” at the end of “Early Years Foundation Stage” (EYFS) and what was being done to improve the targets. In response, it was commented that a series of changes had been flagged and work to improve had already started but it would take about 3-5 years to see any improvements, however some of the bigger issues were around speech and language therapy. There had been some additional funding provided by Greater Manchester with particular focus and dedication to the EYFS which was a very important opportunity to continue the work across all Local Authorities and to work through the home learning environment. Work was also underway to empower parents through the Empowering Communities Programme to provide parental confidence and improve care of confidence.
- Clarification was sought relating to Priority 2, the Poverty Proofing Project and what changes and improvements were being made as part of the budget process. In response, it was commented that the small project would be scaled up and expanded to other schools in Stockport with awareness being raised around the language being used in classrooms by teachers to take into account the impact of poverty on the children in the classroom and the stigma that can be attached. As a result, discussions were being held with Headteachers and the University of Manchester to undertake a research led project into pupils and poverty that would be fed back to the project and the schools involved.
- More detail was requested relating to Priority 4, Stockport Area Partnership and achieving the Quality Lead of Youth Justice Award. In response, it was commented that the particular standard relating to the award “drills down” to the extent to which the young people were known to the Youth Offending Service in terms of “special educational needs” or “disabilities” and how well equipped the responsive services were to meet those young people’s needs. It was noted that not many Youth Offending Services around the country had achieved this, so it was really something to be proud of having achieved the quality standard required.
- Clarification was sought relating to Priority 3, Healthy Weight and why there was an absence of community based interventions support for overweight and obese children below the age of five years. In response, it was commented that the information would be sought from Public Health and shared with the Committee via email following the meeting.
- Clarification was sought relating to Priority 2, Performance Indicators for Key Stage 4 and the slight reduction in the percentage of children achieving a 9-4 pass in English and Maths and what the plans were to improve these targets. In response, it was commented that a strategy was being developed to look at short and long-term targets as a result of the new inspection framework introduced by Ofsted. Training and awareness was being provided for schools to challenge the Ofsted Inspectors’ behaviours and results and further support was being provided to assist schools with the lack of time for the transition to the new framework to take place.
- Clarification was sought regarding Priority 2, Performance Indicators and the “percentage of children attending a secondary school graded good or better by Ofsted” and what the Council were doing to provide support and assistance to these schools. In response, it was commented that when the results were not transparent, schools were being encouraged to ask questions and challenge the Ofsted decisions and results and

support was being provided to schools to do this and to equip them for the new framework.

- Clarification was sought regarding the volume of late applications for primary school places from parents and how it was handled and processed by the Admissions Team. In response, it was commented that the information would be sought from the Admissions Team and shared with the Committee via email following the meeting.
- Clarification was sought relating to the underperformance of 'A' Level attainment figures and whether the library facilities in the borough could assist by improving its facilities. In response, it was commented on that there needed to be a more co-ordinated approach to raising the levels of attainment and a better way of thinking through educational priorities including the building and future locations of schools in the borough. It was also noted that money had already been spent on Central Library to improve its facilities.
- Clarification was sought relating to road safety around schools and educating children about the main road and traffic flow around schools and what further could be done to improve the safety of children. In response, it was commented on that there was a programme being implemented looking at individual schools across the borough and ways to improve the management of traffic around schools which have been consulted on using traffic regulation orders at the Area Committees. A number of schools have already had traffic calming measures and traffic restrictions implemented in the borough, but there are many left to do and it would take some time. It was commented, that there was also serious concern about the safeguarding issues relating to the children around the schools and the speed of vehicles driving by and the parking on double yellow lines putting children at risk.
- Clarification was sought regarding the Joint Commissioning Group and how it was feeding into the SEND Strategy. In response, it was commented on that a number of activities were well underway and progress was being made at different levels. A project team has been appointed with an over-arching approach who are also working jointly with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). There was a lot of performance monitoring that had been ongoing and a joint dashboard had been developed containing key performance data from both the council and the CCG to monitor progress, identify key trends and enable 'spotlights' from the SEND Board on strategic priorities. An interim SEND lead was also in place which had strengthened the approach and the team with the DfE returning in April and July 2020
- Further details were requested relating to the "percentage of child sexual exploitation referrals recorded as being at high risk" as a result of recent news in the press. In response, it was commented that joint work between council officers and the police was underway together with the ASPIRE Team dealing with complex safeguarding issues. There is also an integrated unit involving the police and social workers who worked quite closely at lower level integration and multi-agency working with young people who are at a high risk of sexual exploitation. This partnership has been highly effective with some very positive results with school nurses, the youth offending team, police officers and social workers all working tirelessly to raise awareness regarding the preventative agenda.
- Clarification was sought relating to Priority 4 and the projects involved to keep young people safe. In response, it was commented that there was an autumn schedule of targeted youth support programmes that had been developed with Stockport County, Manchester City and Manchester United football clubs. There was also a knife crime awareness programme also being delivered across all secondary schools in the borough and other educational establishments and community safety partnership

programmes funded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Home Office with an action plan.

- It was commented that in relation to the Teachers Pay Grant, it would be unfair to ask schools to cut their budgets even more and then to ask the schools to fund an additional 2% pay award. In response, it was commented that at a recent meeting of the Schools Forum the issue had been raised regarding future pay increases for teachers and how it would be funded and the consequential impact on schools budgets.
- Members thanked MOSAIC, a support service for people aged 25 and under who needed help with drug and alcohol issues or who needed support to cope with parents who misused substances, for their good work and categorisation as “Outstanding” by the Care Quality Commission in March 2019.
- Councillors welcomed the “Step Outside” road safety programme in primary schools, the “Bikeability” programme and Priority 3 relating to children and young people enjoying good health and schools receiving training and responding to issues relating to anxiety and the risk of suicide.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That future reports submitted to the Scrutiny Committee that referenced figures and percentages, should also have a clear explanation to provide clarity and context to the data.

5. SCHOOLS FUNDING SETTLEMENT AND LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA 2020/21

A joint report of the Director of Children’s Services and the Borough Treasurer was submitted (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the key announcements made by the Department of Education (DfE) on the education funding settlement for 2020/21.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Family Services & Education (Councillor Colin Foster) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised: -

- The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation would continue to be provided in four notional blocks following the Ministerial announcement in December 2019 with the first phase of the additional £13b nationally being invested from 2021, with £2.6b in the first year being invested nationally, which according to the national funding formula model represented an approximate 4% uplift.
- Stockport would see a baseline DSG allocation rising from £223m to about £238m as outlined in the report.
- The School’s Budget with its own funding formula model for both primary and secondary schools would continue to be adopted for 2021 following consultation with the Schools Forum.
- Further details were awaited from the DfE relating to the next level of structure for the national funding formula which is being planned to move to a “hard national funding formula” where the local authority had limited flexibility.
- Regarding the school’s block announcement for 2021, there would be a rise of about £11m for Stockport due to an increase in pupil numbers and new minimum funding levels.

- The Schools Forum had confirmed that a central reserve of about £450k will be held to deal with any infant class size issues.
- Any schools that received a reduction in their budget share as a result of either a fall in pupil numbers or a change in pupil profile would be supported by a minimum funding guarantee protection.
- Clarification was sought regarding the £450k reserve and if any forecasting had been done. In response, it was commented that an amount of funding was set aside each year based upon what had been requested in the previous year together with data and trends information, so it was known which schools would need support.
- Clarification was sought regarding the Early Years Single Funding Formula and the detail regarding what it was used for. In response it was commented that it was used to support staff and provide training with statutory regulation updates and to co-ordinate the programmes across the borough and it was a statutory requirement to have an SEND Inclusion Fund specifically for the 3-4 year old age group.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. AGENDA PLANNING

A representative of the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out planned agenda items for the Scrutiny Committee's next meeting and Forward Plan items which fell within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm