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CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 10 June 2020

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Wendy Meikle (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Linda Holt (Vice-Chair); Councillors Grace Baynham, Laura Booth, Laura Clingan, Yvonne Guariento, Becky Senior, Mark Weldon, David Wilson, Lisa Robinson ((Parent Governor Representative)) and Oliver Harrison ((Parent Governor Representative)).

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 4 March 2020 were approved as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

No declaration were made.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated detailing a summary of progress in delivering the portfolio priorities, reform programme and other key projects since the final update report, with a focus on the fourth quarter of the year (January to March). It includes out-turn performance and financial data (where this is available) for the Portfolio, along with updates 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:-

Priority One

- It was noted that the early days courses and the early years settings was good and improving however, the take up of the free school meals was only 40%. It was commented that the early years foundation stage targets were a priority and following a peer review there was evidence of good practice across Stockport and was being monitored. The figures relate to the school year of 2018/19 and improvements have been put in place and would be reported in due course.

Priority Two

- It was noted that 92% of children were attending a primary school, but the % of children attending a secondary school was reported as a red rating. It was commented that due to the new Ofsted regime introduced on 1 September 2019 and the preparation time for schools there was concerns expressed relating to the lack of flexibility given to secondary schools. It was also stated that there were issues relating to two year KS3 and the choice of options at the end of Year 8 and the delivery of the curriculum.
- Concern was raised relating to persistent absentees and how the children were tracked and the interventions that were involved. It was commented that the Werneth and Brinnington Enhanced Integration programme involving 11 schools (9 Primary & 2 High Schools), delivering in a more integrated and enhanced offer, with a focus on attendance, wellbeing and improving outcomes and then being scaled up to be delivered across Stockport.
- Clarification was sought on the current situation with Covid-19 and the apprentices and whether anything was being done to get young people back into apprenticeships. It was commented that prior to Covid-19, there was already a decline in the apprenticeship programme, but Stockport are putting plans in place to improve getting young people into apprenticeships.

Priority 3

- Clarification was sought on what was being done to address the emotional health of looked after children. It was commented that the emotional health and wellbeing of the looked after children was a priority for Stockport and changes had been made. It was noted that the report related to the outcomes for the last 12 months.
- Clarification was sought relating to the percentage of children in Year 6 classed as underweight and due to Covid-19 and children being off school what would the impact be on the figures. It was commented that a number of programmes were already underway, however, it was difficult to assess what was currently happening, but information would be provided in a future report.

Priority 4

- It was noted that the number of looked after children increased by 14, but low numbers of children with child protection plans was also reported. It was commented that the figures are monitored weekly, but it was below the regional average and further scrutiny had been done looking at the figures together with the safeguarding partnership executive on a regular basis.
- Clarification was sought relating to the increased figures for the children missing from care. It was commented that there was a specific team that monitored this and that Stockport had several hundred children living in Stockport who were looked after children but from other local authorities.

Priority 5

- It was noted that the KS2 results for EHCP & SEN were progressing in the right direction and were a green rating, however, KS4 SEN were red rating. It was commented that the report reflected the time period from June 2019, so those children would now be undertaking their exams and results would be reported in a future report. It was also stated that work was underway to improve the support for SEN was provided much earlier and to support the transitioning for KS2 into secondary school.
- It was noted that the persistent absent rate and the permanent exclusions for the EHCP & SEN were going down, but it didn't match with the permanent exclusions for

the EHCP which was increasing. It was commented that a member of staff from the Attendance & Welfare Service was working with the schools to reduce the exclusions and change the structure and improvements would be reported to a future meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

5. RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an overview of the Council's response to date to the Covid-19 pandemic, building on regular updates received directly by members and including detail relating to the remit of this committee, and a view of how this response will be developing over the coming weeks and months.

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 on the number of vulnerable children going to school. It was commented that the data was being gathered each day which reflected the number of key worker children, the number of vulnerable children and the number of children with an EHCP with around 1,000 children in school each day with 60% being key worker children and 40% being vulnerable children.
- Following the 'R' rate announcement for the NW, steps were taken in consultation with the Director of Public Health and consideration was given to the data and intelligence relating to the trend in Stockport. Further consideration was also given to the local data, risk assessments and the ongoing review of the daily situation and continued with the agreed plan for schools to re-open.
- Clarification was sought relating to digital devices and digital poverty and what was put in place to support this. It was commented that 740 children with social workers received support, three school also received support and work is ongoing to support online teaching across all schools. It was also stated that children below the DfE criteria were also being supported through exploring a 'digital lending library' to support these families.
- It was noted that several cohorts of children would be transitioning from primary to secondary school and up to 6th Form and if any support had been put in place, especially for the SEND children. It was noted that Stockport were working with schools and SEND workers and parent/carers to put things in place to support those children.
- Clarification was sought relating to rough sleepers on the street in Stockport and the numbers relating to young people. It was noted that there were no young people who were rough sleepers in Stockport. It was also noted that it was monitored quite closely and the response had been thorough and comprehensive and had been appraised externally.
- Concern was expressed relating to children who were being home schooled and the lack of communication between teachers, children and parents and the emotional health and wellbeing of these children. It was noted that good quality provisions was being looked at, but there was concerns relating to safeguarding issues and a number of options were being considered.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That thanks be expressed to the Children’s Department at Stockport for the work being done and the support being provided to headteachers across the borough for their schools.

6. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) REVIEW

The Director for Children’s Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the initial findings and recommendations of the dedicated schools grant (DSG) review.

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 on the full details of the DSG review and if the report would be made available in due course. It was commented that it would be available in due course following the governance processes.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That thanks be expressed to the officer team for the work that has gone into the production of the DSG review.

7. WORK PROGRAMME AND AGENDA PLANNING

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

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Deputy Chief Executive be recommended to programme the following items into the Scrutiny Committee’s work programme for the 2020/21 Municipal Year:-

- Knife Crime play – ‘On the Edge’
- Scrutiny Reviews
- Emotional Wellbeing support for schools

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm