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## **CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting: 23 September 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, Lisa Robinson (Parent Governor Representative) and Harrison (Parent Governor Representative).

### **1. MINUTES**

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 15 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.

### **2. DECLARATIONS ON INTEREST**

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

The following interest was declared:-

#### Personal Interests

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Councillor Linda Holt	Agenda Item 4 – Youth Justice Plan 2020/21, by virtue of employment.

### **3. CALL-IN**

There were no call-in items to consider.

### **4. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2020-21**

The Director for Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the achievements against last year's plan and outlined the priorities, opportunities and challenges for the coming year.

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 reduction in the use of custodial sentences and how was it quantified. In response, it was noted that there was a requirement in the Ministry of Justice to report on custody and it was not an intention to send children to

custody un-necessarily and the child who were currently in custody was due to the offences committed and for their own safety and that of the community.

- It was noted that the Stockport Custody sentences was the lowest in the Greater Manchester area.
- It was noted that as advocates for scrutiny and democracy it was important that the Partnership Board received input from victims and offenders relating to youth crime regarding the process and outcomes. In response, it was noted that a company called “Remedy” were commissioned and a victim support officer and restorative justice officer are now based fulltime within the team and following contact with every victim reports are provided to the Board. It was also noted that regarding the voice of the child and family, “Coram Voice” was also commissioned to provide youth justice provisions and also reports to the Board. Children and families were also consulted but don’t want to sit on the Partnership Board so a Shadow Board has been created to listen to the voice of the children and families.
- It was commented that the Committee should consider inviting representatives from the team and the Partnership Board to speak to the Committee about the programme and victims and to provide data relating to how effective the programmes were and the data regarding repeat offenders
- It was noted that the team kept data and tracked the young offenders and were involved in ‘community resolution’ programmes and ‘out of court disposals’ (cautions), which encouraged intervention at an earlier stage and monitoring and reviewing cases to prevent repeat offenders.
- Concern was expressed regarding young people in secure accommodation and the distance of HMP Wetherby that put a strain and had an emotional impact on families.
- Clarification was sought on whether there was a medium or long term plan for a facility to be built closer. In response it was noted that not all the children were in HMP Wetherby as some were in secure training centres and others in secure children homes. It was also noted that the Chair of the Youth Justice Board requested that secure schools be created in the north, similar to secure children’s homes with smaller numbers. However, following a bid to Government on behalf of Greater Manchester, it was agreed to have a secure children’s home built in the south. Northern organisations continue to make representation to the Government regarding smaller and closer facilities.
- It was commented that there should be a target to reduce the number of children in custody and it should be as low as possible.
- It was noted that the ‘voice of the children in police custody’ and ‘one to one’ interviews were on hold during the summer lockdown as such what lessons have been learned from the lockdown period. In response it was noted that contact continued with children throughout lockdown in terms of risk, vulnerability, safety and wellbeing which resulted in being a bit more adaptable and being able to manage the children and their vulnerabilities better.
- Clarification was sought relating to the “On the Edge” strategy and its impact and success. In response, it was noted that since January 2019 when the programme started it has been delivered to over 6,000 children across Stockport including a roll out to Year 5 and 6 in Primary Schools and the knife-crime has been reduced in the Borough.

RESOLVED – That the Committee endorsed and recommended the Youth Justice Plan 2020/21.

## **5. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - DRAFT PORTFOLIO AGREEMENT 2020/21**

Representatives of the Corporate Directors for Corporate & Support Services and Place Management & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the draft 2020/21 Agreements for the Children, Family Services and Education Portfolio for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee.

The agreements provides the policy priorities for 2020/21 that were set out within the adopted Council Plan, incorporating the shared outcomes from the Borough Plan alongside specific priorities of the Cabinet. The priorities within the Portfolio Agreements would form the basis for regular in-year reporting through the Portfolio and Corporate Performance and Resource Reports, enabling the Scrutiny Committee to hold the Cabinet to account.

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:-

- It was commented that the new format of the report was not welcomed and that members preferred the previous version of the data being presented as a RAG rating which made the information easier to read and understand.
- Members expressed appreciation for the report being produced with the input from children and young people including the lived experience and inclusion.
- It was noted that as a result of the pandemic, mums were giving birth on their own and was there any additional support that had been put in place for parents. In response, it was noted that parents were allowed to support birth partners and be able to visit in hospitals.
- Focus on reports about breastfeeding, nationally profile women being pressured into breastfeeding, right to choose and not coerced into a “breastfeeding militia”. In response, it was noted that the “breastfeeding team” supported breastfeeding and any other feeding method chosen by the mother.
- Clarification was sought regarding the reference made to the new targets relating to the digital inclusion strategy and how it was being made available to lower income families. In response, it was noted that the Department for Education (DfE) provided funding for digital devices for children and young people which had been delivered to schools across the borough as well as a digital lending library was being developed for families to borrow digital devices.
- It was noted that the percentage of children attending a secondary school graded good or better was decreasing. In response, it was noted that it was due to the new Ofsted framework.
- Clarification was sought regarding how the targets would be reported going forward. In response, it was noted that there would be gaps in children’s learning and that the exam boards would need to take this into account, so that students would not be penalised unduly.
- It was noted that the cost of keeping a young person in a children’s home had increased considerably from £2,000 in 2016/17 to £4,000-£5,000 in 2019/20 per week. In response, it was noted that it was a significant drain on the Council’s budget despite securing the lowest possible costs for looked after children placements. It was also

noted that due to a hardworking commissioning team to secure lower costs, Stockport Council had managed to negotiate the lowest costs in the Greater Manchester area.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **6. HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out home to school travel and transport arrangements that comply with social distancing requirements including increasing transport capacity across the Greater Manchester area and also provides information on the support provided to schools and settings to ensure school transport was run efficiently.

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 wearing of face masks on school buses and whether it should be mandatory. In response, it was noted that the wearing of face masks would be strongly encouraged on school buses, but there was a worry about the enforcement and communicating the information to parents and students.
- Concern was expressed regarding the 192 bus and the number of users during peak times including students from two colleges, NHS staff getting to and from the hospital and other parents and essential workers. In response, it was noted that the concerns would be raised with the Transport Oversight Group and also with both colleges to introduce additional buses to ease the congestion on the 192 bus.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **7. SCHOOLS RE-OPENING**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing information on the autumn term and the schools re-opening.

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:-

- Members expressed their appreciation to the staff and schools for all the work and effort that went into returning to school including all the preparations and planning to ensure operational procedures relating to risk assessments and safety were provided and put in place.
- Clarification was sought regarding children with underlying health conditions and their parents and if a level of understanding was being shown regarding their attendance. In response, it was noted that support was being provided and a level of sensitivity was being shown including the involvement of the Education Welfare Service to provide support to the families.

- Clarification was sought regarding whether the multi-agency services e.g. Inclusion & Behaviour Support Services were returning to schools. In response, it was noted that the multi-agency services were returning to school, however, the head of those services would have to do a risk assessment, but no longer multi-visits on the same day as it increases the risk in terms of cross contamination.
- It was commented that successful provisions were put in place over the summer for 'holiday hunger', but clarification was sought regarding what provisions were being made for the October half term and the Christmas holidays. In response, it was noted that a review of the provisions over the summer had taken place including the interventions by Government to provide food vouchers following a letter to Government by Marcus Rashford (Manchester United Football Player). It was also noted that 'holiday hunger' longer term schemes and programmes were also being discussed including the forthcoming October half term and the Christmas holidays.
- Clarification was sought regarding the recent school closures during lockdown and the lessons that had been learnt. In response, it was noted that Government guidance would be taken on board, but also making provisions for key workers and vulnerable students, home learning and the quality could be enhanced, national online tutoring programme and risk assessments and operational guidance.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **8. AGENDA PLANNING**

A representative of the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal & Democratic Governance) 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.

The following comments were made/issues raised: -

- A member requested that a report relating to "what are the strategies and policies on bullying in Stockport" be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.
- A member also requested that a report relating to "what leisure and sports activities specifically for disabled people were available in the borough" be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal & Democratic Governance) be recommended to programme the following items into the Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the 2020/21 Municipal Year:-

- What are the Council's strategies and policies on bullying in Stockport School's; and
- What leisure and sports activities specifically for disabled people were available in the borough.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm