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CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 9 December 2020

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

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

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 23 September 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.

The following interest was declared:-

Personal Interests

Councillor

Interest

Councillor Linda Holt	Agenda Item 9 – Youth Justice Plan 2020/21, by virtue of employment.
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3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. STOCKPORT SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Independent Chair for the Stockport Safeguarding Board submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing a summary of the effectiveness of services in the town to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- Members enquired about the recruitment of the lay members to the Board and whether any retired Councillors had been approached. In response, it was stated that the Board were looking at the assurance partnerships to bring the scrutiny aspect to the Board through the lay members and will be looking more closely at it going forward.
- Clarification was sought regarding the number of members on the Board since the change in the structure. In response, the Board were informed that following the re-

structure the Board membership had been reduced by two-thirds with capacity being released to the Sub Committees where a lot of work is done.

- Members enquired about the pandemic and the impact on response to referrals from both within the partnership and external organisations regarding child safety. In response, it was stated that there has been a huge impact especially with working virtually as services were not as visible as before, but weekly Covid meetings were held to ensure the responses were right and to discuss any children that had been identified as being at risk.
- Concern was expressed by Members regarding the lack of response by children's social services to specific referrals raised through the Stockport Foodbank and in one specific case, not being able to get a social worker to deal or look into the circumstances raised with various children. In response, it was stated that the issue raised should not have happened as when a referral is required, the multi-agency safeguarding support hub has been staffed throughout the pandemic and it should have been acted upon immediately. Further information was requested to be shared regarding the specific case which would be followed up by the team as soon as possible.
- Clarification was sought regarding the increase in numbers in the children in need cases and regarding the online training being shared more widely with other interested individuals who may have an interest in safeguarding. In response, it was stated that it has been a 10% increase in children in need cases which was as a result of the early period of the pandemic where things slowed down relating to working with families and an increase in referrals. It was also stated that the online training is available to third sector colleagues who would also like to access the training.

The Chair thanked Gill Frame, Nuala O' Rourke and Deborah Woodcock for a very detailed report and for their attendance.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

5. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - MID-YEAR REPORT 2020/21

The Director for Children's Services and the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing the Mid-Year Portfolio Performance and Resource Report (PPRR) for the Children, Family Services and Education Portfolio. The report provided a summary of progress in delivering the portfolio priorities, reform programme and other key projects in the first half of the year, with a particular focus on the second quarter (July to September) and up to the end of October where possible. The report also included a forecast on performance and financial data (where this was available) 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 RAG ratings in general and Priority 5 regarding young people missing from home/care. In response, it was stated that discussions were underway regarding the RAG ratings and how it was derived at.

- Members enquired about Priority Two, CFSE29 and the “Percentage of care leavers (19-21) in suitable education, training and employment and the reasons for the ‘red rating’. In response, it was noted that it was an improvement from last year for the same period with an ambitious target and that comparatively Stockport were doing well. It was also stated that there was collaboration with employment and skills and higher/further education to improve the work in the area.
- It was commented that the schools have performed really well regarding Covid-19 and the ‘track and trace’ system, however, there have been concerns regarding getting to and from school and the various bus routes. In response, it was noted that it was a challenge to ‘police’ children and young people on buses regarding the wearing of masks, but discussions were underway to look at different approaches with schools looking at ‘self-isolating’ and ‘bubbles’ accordingly.
- Members enquired about the transitions for primary and secondary school pupils during the pandemic. In response, it was stated that work had taken place before the Covid pandemic, but since then more creative and innovative methods have been adopted by schools, for example, virtual school tours which have been received positively by parents. In addition, there would be some learning to adopt post-Covid which would be looked at accordingly.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. RESPONDING TO OUR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - UPDATE FOLLOWING THE 2020 SPENDING REVIEW

The Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) building on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update report presented to the Cabinet meeting in October to ensure the MTFP forecasts and assumptions continued to be robust and based on the latest information.

The report included an update on the financial impact of announcements made since October including the ongoing national and local response to the COVID19 pandemic; and the Government’s 2020 Spending Review.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Resources & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

Members enquired about the breakdown of staff relating to vacancy management and how much savings was achieved including vacancies in the various service areas. In response, it was stated that the reference was one vacancy within the Public Health department that has been vacant for some time.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/2022-2026/2027

The Corporate Director (Place) and the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the 2020/21 Asset Management Plan capital

programme, including a programme of work for inclusion in the 2021/22 financial year and the indicative programme up to 2026/27

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Resources & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- It was commented that once the criteria is published for building schools that consideration be given to building a school in the Offerton ward because young people are having to travel to Hazel Grove, Harrytown, Werneth and Marple and there would be a possible site that could be identified. In response, it was stated that the data would need to be thoroughly analysed in terms of need, future demand and capacity elsewhere before it goes into the programme.
- Members enquired about the funding from Government for the Capital Programme as it could have long term repair problems for schools. In response, it was commented that the Local Government Association would prefer that the announcement was soon, as every authority was in a similar situation.
- It was commented that the report makes reference to the potential funding criteria being given to the authority, but were there any timescales identified. In response, it was noted that once the guidance is published, there would be bidding rounds and other processes to follow as it would be a 10 year programme and there are no guarantees to be in the first round.
- Clarification was sought regarding Bramhall High School and its proposed re-development. In response, it was stated that it was being looked at over the next 12 months through a rank assessment over the criteria to show the priorities.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRANSPORT TO SCHOOL

The Corporate Director (Place) and the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing the results of the review of the current Stockport Sustainable Modes of School Travel Strategy that has been undertaken as a result of the current strategy running till the end of 2020.

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 stated that reference to the 'female education escorts' being three times more likely to undertake the journeys maybe due to them having children in school during those times. In response, it was stated that from a contract point of view the persons just had to be suitable and meet the criteria to undertake the duties.
- It was commented that the report refers to sustainable travel and schools offering a range of initiatives to encourage active travel and improve road safety near schools as part of its packages which may have to be paid for and wouldn't this be a challenge for

schools. In response, it was noted that currently there was no plan to establish any charges in the future and in all circumstances all schools were encouraged to take part.

- It was noted that all the good work that had gone into walking and cycling was undone by the Covid situation by parents switching to buses and cars. In response, it was stated that it was a difficult time and it was a safety concern for parents, but things would be put into place to contribute to the culture change again by promoting walking, cycling and a number of initiatives and programmes about road safety, safety around schools and sustainable transport.
- Members enquired about cycling to school and the cycle allowance. In response, it was stated that the information would be confirmed and shared with the Committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the cycling allowance be clarified and shared with the Committee.

9. STOCKPORT SERIOUS YOUTH VIOLENCE STRATEGY 2020

The Director of children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing Stockport's response to Serious Youth Violence, including Knife Crime, based on the Home Office 'Serious Violence Strategy' and the development of 'Violence Reduction Units' locally.

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:-

Stockport Serious Youth Violence Strategy 2020

- Members enquired about the percentages included in the report with no actual figures to make the comparisons. In response, it was reported that the figures were taken from the Children's Commissioner national report.
- Clarification was sought regarding any evidence regarding knife-crime being reduced with "On the Edge" programme in Stockport. In response, it was noted that Stockport figures were lower than any other authority in the Greater Manchester area with the "On the Edge" programme being a preventative programme over three tiers, which has been monitored since January 2019 and there were no significant rises.
- It was commented that there are a number of restorative programmes in place for people already involved in crime, but were there any preventative measures in place. In response, it was stated these programmes were part of the targeted preventative programme and children and young people didn't have to be involved in crime to benefit from the programme.

"On the Edge" Knife-Crime Programme

- Members enquired if there were different programmes that were used for primary and secondary schools. In response, it was stated that the programme was adaptable that allowed for different methods being used for both primary and secondary schools to reflect the age groups.

- Clarification was sought regarding whether the students got involved in the delivery of the training programme. In response, it was stated that the programme was very interactive with discussions and engagement with 'peer on peer' sessions with an experienced facilitator.
- It was commented that the programme started in February 2019 with around 6,000 young people being reached to date. In response, it was stated that it was not delivered through assemblies but by classes and on average it would have about 30 students in attendance.
- Members enquired about the response from parents with the programme being delivered in schools. In response, it was noted that the feedback from parents have been really positive as a result of the discussion being facilitated and providing the opportunity for parents to sit down and discuss it with their own children.
- It was noted that a Greater Manchester policy has been drafted regarding 'what to do if a child takes a weapon into school' which has been localised for Stockport schools and work is ongoing with head-teachers and deputy head-teachers for it to be adopted.

The Committee recognised the detail in the report and thanked Jacqui Belfield-Smith and her team for such a well written report and the impact the "On the Edge" programme was having within schools.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That arrangements be made for the Committee to view the "One the Edge" programme being delivered post Covid-19.

10. OUT OF COURT DISPOSALS

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing details on Stockport's Youth Diversion Panel which reviews Out of Court Disposals (a pre-court intervention to children who offend) and assurance on the level of intervention offered and subsequent reoffending rates.

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 enquired about the "bespoke programmes" and why was only the 'Youth Conditional Caution' group allowed to take the programme and not all three groups identified in the report. In response, it was stated that there were three different levels of intervention which depended on the severity of the offense committed which in turn determined their involvement in the levels.
- Clarification was sought regarding the 44% of 're-offenders' who were currently under investigation for further offences and waiting to find out if they would be charged. In response, it was stated that the figures were over a three month period with the investigations taking a longer time to produce the outcomes, but assurance was given to the Committee that it was being monitored across the Greater Manchester area.

The Committee thanked Jacqui Belfield-Smith and her team for the details of the report and their attendance.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

11. 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 Committee were informed that the following reports had been scheduled accordingly: -

- January 2021 - a report relating to “what are the strategies and policies on bullying in Stockport”
- April 2021 - a report relating to “what was being done in Stockport schools to educate young people about racism”.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.56 pm