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CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 15 July 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 and Lisa Robinson (Parent Governor Representative).

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 10 June 2020 were approved as a correct record.

The Chair was of the view that notwithstanding the provisions of Council Meeting Procedure Rule 18.1 that prevented any matter other than the accuracy of the Minutes to be raised under this item, that by exception she would permit a departure from the Rule to allow the following additional points to be discussed:-

Minute No. 5 – Responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Councillor Becky Senior enquired about the preparations for schools re-opening in September 2020.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Family Services & Education (Councillor Colin Foster) informed the Committee that Constitutionally there was no facility to ask questions on the minutes of the previous meeting and that it was not in order. He then stated that there was a lot of ongoing work with individual schools and centrally at Stockport to take matters forward and adhering to Government guidance and that work was in progress.

Minute No. 5 – Responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Councillor Grace Baynham enquired about the lack of summer activities for children due to the pandemic and if anything could be done with providers for these facilities to be opened during the summer.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Family Services & Education (Councillor Colin Foster) informed the Committee that work is ongoing to enable activities to carry on during the summer and formal communications and paperwork would be published in due course.

The Chair enquired about the school bus service provisions and any staggered starts that would begin in Stockport.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Family Services & Education (Councillor Colin Foster) informed the Committee that the issue was being looked at and discussions were underway with Transport for Greater Manchester.

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 declarations were made.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. STOCKPORT SECONDARY SPECIAL FREE SCHOOL

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the progress to date and the outcome of the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) selection progress for approval.

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 relating to the representation on the Board and any assurances that could be given regarding the person chosen would have the relevant understanding of the needs of the children and would be user led. It was commented that the Stockport Council would have senior strategic representation on the MAT Board to influence how the children would be educated and places commissioned within the borough, but also clear leadership, governance and structure; and
- Concern was expressed regarding the type of MAT that would be in place and assurance was sought regarding the ethos of the MAT. It was commented that there was a rigorous scoring and scrutiny process with all the academies that were shortlisted. It was noted that the values and principles of Stockport needed to be met and Stockport Council were in agreement with the outcome of the selection process and that selected MAT would deliver for Stockport and Stockport children.
- Clarification was sought regarding how the MAT would be funded. It was commented that initial funding would be provided for the setting up of the facility. The MAT would then receive funding and maintain the facility through the funding they obtain and the pupil places that would be commissioned within the borough so a savings would be made for this provision.
- Clarification was sought on the reasons for the choice of the site. In response, it was commented that the original bid was strengthened by the fact that a proposed site was ready for development and there was already a physical structure in place to be used within the school portfolio.
- Concern was expressed about the local authority's relationship with the MAT provider and what this may mean with regard to the potential for future such partnerships. In response, it was commented that under the current regulatory local authorities would need to comply with the legislation and proceed with the development of "free schools to deliver new schools in the borough", as the previous option of building maintained schools was no longer available with the new legislation.

- Clarification was sought regarding transport to and from the site with regards to bus routes. In response, it was commented that a proposed travel plan would be developed in detail for each individual pupil.
- Concern was expressed regarding what assurances could be given for the children with the additional needs and the care that would be entrusted to the external provider. In response, it was commented that involved in the selection process was a detailed scrutiny of the providers through questions and looking at the Trust's previous experiences and being specialist providers with a SEND provision track record for delivery. It was also stated that part of the interview process involved the DfE doing "due diligence checks" on the Trust and being sound in terms of its performance and its financial position.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations be agreed and submitted to Cabinet for approval.

5. 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.

The following comments were made/issues raised: -

- A member requested that an update on what was being done in Stockport schools to educate young people about racism be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.
- A member requested that "Counselling in Schools" be included as part of the Scrutiny Review into the "Mental and Emotional Wellbeing Support for Schools".

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

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

- Racism – what was being done in schools to educate young people about racism.

(3) That the Deputy Chief Executive be recommended to programme the following Scrutiny Reviews for 2020/21 and that the following members be nominated to participate in the scrutiny reviews: -

- Supporting Young People's Mental and Emotional Wellbeing and Counselling in Schools –
 - Councillor Laura Booth
 - Councillor Grace Baynham
 - Councillor Becky Senior
 - Councillor Linda Holt
- Children's and Young People's Participation –
 - Councillor Mark Weldon

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The meeting closed at 6.40 pm.