

CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 27 January 2021

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

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

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 9 December 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 interests were declared.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. COVID-19 UPDATE

The Director for Children's Services provided a verbal update of the Covid-19 pandemic relating to Children and Families in Stockport and Stockport Schools.

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 thanked the management team for the governance arrangements in place and for the various improvements that had been made relating to remote learning and the school improvement plan.
- Clarification was sought regarding whether schools were able to share best practices. In response, it was confirmed that provisions were in place for schools to share best practice and the school improvement advisors were working directly with schools and met weekly.
- Concerns were expressed regarding school resources, service level agreements and other packages that schools spent money on, but were unable to have those services delivered due to the pandemic. In response, it was commented that the concerns raised would be looked into, but some of the services were delivered virtually and schools would not be penalised in anyway.

- Members enquired about the digital services for Stockport schools and the progress. In response, it was stated that digital connectivity was being looked at across Stockport schools and supporting families with connectivity and devices e.g. dongles and wifi. It was also noted that some of the devices that had been donated needed to be 'cleaned' and prepared for schools to ensure safeguarding and functionality and was being explored further to ensure safety for children.
- Clarification was sought regarding how schools knew if the students would be logged in and engaged in the lessons throughout the day. In response, it was noted that Ofsted produced a document about engagement which schools were aware of and used.
- Members asked about the anti-social behaviour and criminal behaviour statistics and whether much had changed during the pandemic. It was stated that the Youth Offending Partnership Board met earlier that week and it was agreed that the statistics would be collated and shared with the Committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That the update be noted and the officer team be thanked.

(2) That the anti-social behaviour and criminal behaviour statistics be shared with the Committee.

5. ONE STOCKPORT BOROUGH PLAN

The Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Devolution and the Deputy Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the One Stockport Borough Plan, covering how partners had approached the development of a shared borough plan, including an overview of the insight which had informed the development of the priorities, and introducing the draft plan for the Scrutiny Committee's comments.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- Members sought clarification on the figures relating to employment by 2030. In response, it was noted that there would be significant changes to the market and based upon the intelligence, data and national research the figure of 85% job creativity by 2030 was derived.
- It was commented that the plan was a bit more focused than previous versions which was good for scrutiny and families in Stockport, however, there needed to be more improvement relating to children living in poverty with a laser focus to improve this for the children of Stockport.
- Members also commented that the plan had greatly improved and now included details and strategies, but more engagement was needed as there were still a number of people who had not yet heard about One Stockport.
- There was a request for additional information and links to the documents referred to in the plan.
- It was commented that the plan and research was capturing the employment and skills and lifelong learning across the borough and preparing the residents to respond to the changes and working with Greater Manchester Combined Authority to improve the plan and make it stronger.
- Members enquired about raising the awareness of the plan across the Borough including engaging with people on and through social media and expressed some concerns regarding the mental health and wellbeing of the young people across the

borough. In response, it was stated that mental health would be included in the plan and the social media figures would be shared with the Committee.

- There was a concern regarding the number of people who had been engaged across the borough and enquiries were made relating to how that could be improved upon to address the inequalities for the deprived and disadvantaged in the borough. In response, it was noted that the comments would be taken on board and assurance would be provided regarding a stronger emphasis on the inequalities and what could be done to address it across Stockport.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the social media figures relating to the engagement of the Borough Plan be shared with the Committee.

6. SCHOOLS FUNDING SETTLEMENT AND LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA 2021/22

The Corporate Director (Place) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the Schools Funding Settlement and Local Funding Formula 2021/22 and the key announcements made by the Department for Education (DfE) on the education funding settlement for 2021/22.

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 reduction in transport for SEND pupils as it related to the settlement. In response, it was stated that SEND transport costs are not permitted expenditure to be charged to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) as there were no accounts for this, within the DSG, however, the budget resources that finance SEND Transport were within the local authority cash limit budget which was governed by the medium term financial plan process.
- Concern was expressed regarding the high needs block deficit that appears year on year as the greatest cost pressure. In response, it was commented that Central Government was recognising the pressures regarding the high needs block for local authorities, but the local position was better in terms of the previous financial years. It was also stated that it can be complex and costly when dealing with the high needs block but local agreement has gained approval from the School's Forum to transfer £900k to repay the deficit, which by 2021/22 will be reduced to £1.5m and the ongoing deficit would continue to be reviewed each year.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. 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: -

April 2021

- Racism Update - a report relating to “what was being done in Stockport schools to educate young people about racism”.
- Bullying Update - a report relating to “what are the strategies and policies on bullying in Stockport”
- Leisure & Sports Disability Update - an update relating to the leisure and sporting activities that were available specifically for disabled people in Stockport
- Covid-19 Update

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm