

**MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE  
CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting: 16 June 2021  
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Wendy Meikle (Chair) in the chair; Councillor ; Councillors Anna Charles-Jones, Gary Lawson, Becky Senior, Andy Sorton, Sue Thorpe, David Wilson and Brian Bagnall.

**CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

On behalf of the Committee the Chair: -

- Thanked the Councillors who had served on the Committee for 2020/2021 and expressed the Committee's gratitude for all their hard work including the two Scrutiny Reviews that were held and for their contributions to the final report.
- Welcomed the new and returning members to the Committee for 2021/22 and was looking forward to working with the Committee and the continued scrutiny and holding the Cabinet to account.
- Congratulated Chris McLoughlin (Director of Children's Services) who received an OBE in the Queen's honours list.
- Welcomed the new Director of Education, Tim Bowman to the meeting.

**1. MINUTES**

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 14 April 2021 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. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST**

RESOLVED – That in order to prevent the disclosure of information which was not for publication, the disclosure of which would not be in the public interest, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any of the exempt information in

Agenda Item 7 – ‘Health Visiting and School Nurses and Family Nurse Partnership’ should it be necessary for the Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on these aspects of the report.

## **5. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

The Corporate Director (Place) & the Deputy Chief Executive and the Corporate Director (Corporate & Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing 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 in Priority One – Social and Emotional pathway development, that parents had reported a stigma regarding asking for help. In response, it was stated that most families felt embarrassed about asking for help as there was a stigma attached. Stockport was clear about building respectful relationships with children and families and helping with the universal provisions. Ongoing work continued with health visitor visits with every child and baby with a number of examples from last year due to the pandemic where parents have now asked for help due to the environment and relationships being created.

### **Priority Two**

- A further subset of information was requested relating to SEND pupils in Priority Two (CFSE 25 – CFSE 29) to be shared with the Committee for future monitoring purposes.
- Clarification was sought on the ‘catch up money’ from Government referred to in Priority Two – “School Effectiveness” and when and how much was expected. In response it was noted that most of the ‘catch up money’ was directed to the school’s and it was up to the school’s within the Government framework to spend that money accordingly. It was also stated that the monies were paid twice last year, with any monies that was leftover being rolled over to this year due to the timeframes involved during the pandemic. Work was currently underway with schools to define the priorities for the borough going forward for the next 3-5 years and feedback from schools would be sought relating to the priorities and its framework.
- Clarification was sought regarding the borough’s preparations for reception children. In response, it was stated that lots of work had been done across Greater Manchester to help schools think about the Year 1 curriculum and approach. It was noted that last year there was a huge effort in terms of transition to secondary schools and has now risen to the top of the agenda for transitional situation for children.

Priority Four

- Regarding Priority Four – CFSE50, the Children in Care per 10,000, 0-17 year olds has provided a figure of 59, can this be explained. In response, it was stated that this figure was the actual rate and not the actual figure, but in future the actual figure would also be included.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

**6. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - DRAFT PORTFOLIO AGREEMENT 2021/22**

The Corporate Director (Place) & Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director (Corporate & Support Services) & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the draft 2020/21 agreements for the Citizen Focus and Engagement and Resources, Commissioning and Governance portfolios for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee.

The agreements articulated the policy priorities for 2021/22 that were set out within the adopted Council Plan, incorporating the shared outcomes from the Borough Plan alongside specific priorities of the Cabinet. These priorities, re-shaped to take account of One Stockport and Building Back Better (building on Covid19), are articulated within the Portfolio Agreements, which form the basis for regular in-year reporting.

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 'Earmarked Reserves' and the 'Balance of Reserve' figure of £794,000 for SEND – Written Statement of Action. In response, it was stated that this amount was drawn down to respond to the actions following the CQC Inspection and the SEND area inspection. It was to do the strategic work e.g. the formation of the single point of access for wellbeing and the work undertaken to establish it in April 2021.
- Clarification was also sought regarding 'Performance Measures and Targets' – CFSE11 and how it compared to regional and national targets and how attainable was the 78.8%. In response, it was stated that three secondary schools which had been inspected in September 2019 and were categorised as being 'Inadequate' under the new Ofsted regime. However, since March 2020 there have been no other inspections due to the pandemic and the inspections being frozen. It was also stated that the figures and percentage was a reflection of two or three schools improving that would affect the overall target. There would also have been some incremental changes had the Ofsted regime continued. It was also noted that the comparative information would be provided to the Committee.
- Clarification was sought regarding 'Performance Measures and Targets' – CFSE12(ii) and what the reasons were for the reduction. In response, it was noted that a written response would be provided to the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **7. HEALTH VISITING AND SCHOOL NURSES AND FAMILY NURSE PARTNERSHIP**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing details to ensure the Committee were sighted on the extension until 31 March 2022 of the contract between the Council and Stockport NHS Foundation Trust in relation to the provision of health visiting, school nursing and Family Nurse Partnership services and also describes an indicative timeline of the next steps, to ensure that Stockport continues to receive a high quality service, new policy guidance is incorporated into the service and disruption to business is minimised.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Family Services & Education (Councillor Colin Foster) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair commented that the work done by the Family Nurse Partnership was quite impressive and prevented a number of young people from going into care.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) Cabinet be recommended to approve the extension to 2022.

## **8. WOODFORD DEVELOPMENT - NEW SCHOOL GOVERNANCE DECISION**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the two options available to the local authority regarding the management and governance of the new school.

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: -

- There was a discussion regarding the draft report previously circulated to the Governors of Queensgate School before local ward councillors and the Scrutiny Committee.
- Clarification was sought regarding the number of children that had applied to Queensgate in 2021 and how many places were offered. In response, it was stated that 176 applications for Queensgate were made and 30 places were allocated up to national offer day. In the lead up to national offer day discussions with the Governing Body and Headteacher had taken place regarding flexible arrangements to take the offer up to 45. It was also stated that further work was being undertaken regarding pupil projections across the borough while ensuring the commissioning of new places would not undermine existing schools or places.
- Clarification was sought regarding the costs of the highway mitigation to get children from Bramhall to Woodford. It was commented that the work had not been done in the process as the considerations at this time were only the options contained in the report.
- It was commented that the Woodford Garden Village was not geared up for the highway network that would be generated twice a day. In response, it was stated that there would need to be a travel impact assessment for both options that would be provided in due course. It was also noted that in the Section 106 agreement that the developer has agreed to employ a person to look at the needs and the infrastructure.

- It was noted that in order to make the area safe for the children who would be walking and/or taking a bus or car would be quite costly and needs to be considered.
- There was a discussion regarding the 750 houses being proposed by Redrow and the 920 houses included in the report. It was noted that certain information could not be included in the report regarding any further developments.
- Clarification was sought on the length of the consultation and when it could be opened in 2022. In response, it was reported that it was not a long consultation relating to the importance of the decision to be made, but will take it into account.
- It was commented that there was a planning decision taken in 2014 with comments made by the then Head of Education. In response, it was noted that a school will be opened on the site and would be delivered and it was important to listen to local councillors, officers, local community and schools.
- Clarification was sought regarding paragraph 4.19 and the reference to “a small number of current pupils will have to travel over 3 miles to get to the new site”. In response, it was stated that a written response would be provided to the Committee.
- It was commented that the report provided a start of the formal process with the options being established and what needs to be worked through. It was also stated that once it is established what Queensgate want to do, that engagement should involve local councillors going forward.
- Clarification was sought regarding paragraph 2.1 and the reference to “the Section 106 agreement to ensure that the school is available in for the academic year when the 450<sup>th</sup> unit is occupied”. In response, it was stated that the school would be available from June 2022.
- Clarification was sought regarding when the decision was taken relating to Queensgate and the two options. In response, it was stated that a decision had not been taken as there were only two options and it was not reduced to two options. It was also noted that the report with the options had only been available since April 2021.
- It was commented that one larger school rather than two smaller schools, there would be implications for road safety and more people travelling and the increase in air quality.
- It was noted that despite the constraints on the Council for the options for the new school, there were implications to balance place planning between the local plan and the projections and the capacity for the new school.
- It was commented that most of the schools in Stockport are already oversubscribed and there are parking issues, problems with pollution and children’s safety at risk, so the new school in Woodford Village should be pursued.
- Councillor Bagnall also made a statement to the meeting that included the following key points: -
  - The report being biased in favour of Queensgate School closing;
  - The report lacking supporting data and not taking into account children and their families and the right to parental choice;
  - The right solution would be for Woodford Garden Village to be opened next September and Queensgate School to remain open;
  - The Education Authority failing to understand the local geography and the current and future housing development;
  - More cars and carbon emissions would be on the local roads and would deter more children from walking to school;
  - There was a lack of highways costs or plans for children and cars to safely access the site;

- Local councillors were keen to see the planning permissions tied to deadlines to establish a sense of community and provide confidence for families moving into the area;
- Families in Woodford Garden Village need school places near their homes now, not in two years;
- Local residents would be affected by this proposal and it would wreck their quality of life;
- A School Place Planning Board was only just being put together seven years after the school was first suggested;
- The report was not consistent and refers to there being 'pressure on school places', but then refers to 'more places undermining existing schools';
- The parents and children of Woodford and Bramhall deserve to have a choice and deserve to have both an excellent school and a new school that has been promised;
- The cost implications for opening a new school and updating the existing school;
- The planning permission involved and a legally binding agreement;
- The housing density across Woodford and the demand for primary aged children;
- Other local schools that are already oversubscribed;
- The movement of the SEND Resource provision;
- The statutory walking distances for primary school children under eight years old compared to the shortest walking route from Queensgate to Woodford School;
- The length of the pre-stage and stage two consultation periods;
- The current timetable needed to be reconsidered to allow sufficient time for potential bidders; and
- The advantages of opening a school in September 2022.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the following proposals be forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration: -

- That the Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Education include local ward councillors in the decision making process.
- That the timelines are brought forward to provide the most opportunity for officers and other parties to deliver it on time.

## **9. UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRANSFORMATION**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the progress and implementation of the children's services transformation and integration 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 paragraph 3.6 and the plans for the shared services and how the Pupil Referral Unit would be re-framed. In response, it was stated that to date a Working Group has been established to look at the shared services and the Committee would be kept up to date with any developments. It was also noted that

there was a public consultation in 2020, following which work has been undertaken with headteachers and stakeholders on the options going forward.

- It was commented that the proposed changes to the Pupil Referral Unit should be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted

(2) That a report relating to the proposed changes to the Pupil Referral Unit be submitted to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

#### **10. UPDATE ON LEISURE AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY OR SPECIFIC NEED IN STOCKPORT**

The Director for Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on recent and planned support for SEND children, young people and families to access leisure and sports provision and also outlined the developmental support to enable SEND families to be more active within their daily routines.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Family Services & Education (Councillor Colin Foster) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee welcomed the report and reflected on the level of activities, the development of activities for SEND and young people to access and the level of details contained within the report.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the proposed recommendations be endorsed.

#### **11. WORK PROGRAMME AND 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 Forward Plan items.

The Chair proposed that an update on the improvements and plans to address the concerns raised relating to accessing information for those with 'mental health issues' raised by the Stockport College – Equalities Council and the recommendations proposed by the Scrutiny Review be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Senior proposed that the 'Bullying Update' also include information and an analysis relating to the situation in Stockport regarding 'sexism and misogyny in schools' and also an update on Post 16 routes into apprenticeships and the destination of young people and what the authority was doing.

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 2021/22 Municipal Year:-

- A report on the improvements and plans to address the concerns raised relating to accessing information for those with 'mental health issues' raised by the Stockport College – Equalities Council and the recommendations proposed by the Scrutiny Review Panel.
- That the 'Bullying Update' or a separate report be submitted to include information and an analysis relating to the situation in Stockport regarding 'sexism and misogyny in schools.
- An update on Post-16 routes into apprenticeships and the destination of young people and what the authority was doing to support this process.

The meeting closed at 8.08 pm