

CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 13 October 2021

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

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

Vote of Thanks

The Chair on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee congratulated Deborah Woodcock on her recent appointment as Director of Children's Services at Cheshire East Council and wished her the best in her new role. The Chair also thanked Deborah for her 29 and half years' service, commitment and hard work to Stockport and its Children's Services.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 8 September 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.

The following interest was declared:-

Personal Interests

Councillors	Interest
Wendy Wild	Agenda Item 5 – Responding to Our Medium Term Financial Plan, as a School Governor at Cale Green Primary School.
Andy Sorton	Agenda Item 5 – Responding to Our Medium Term Financial Plan, as his partner was employed in the Library Service in Stockport.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. CASH FOR KIDS CHARITY - PRESENTATION

A representative of the Cash for Kids Charity attended the meeting and made a presentation to the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the charity's Christmas project and

raising awareness of the aim of the charity to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and young people in the community who were affected by poverty, illness, neglect or those with additional needs.

The following comments were made/issues raised: -

- The Committee welcomed the presentation and the aim of the charity to support the children and young people in Stockport who were in need.
- Good to hear that contributions and donations are kept in Stockport for Stockport children.
- Clarification was sought regarding the length of time the project has been in existence. In response, it was stated that this particular project has been ongoing for the last four years, however, the charity has been in existence for the last 15 years in the Greater Manchester area, Preston and Liverpool.
- It was commented that Stockport Homes could also be involved in the project as they would be aware of families that were struggling and in need.
- It was stated that the charity listened to communities and responded to the needs through ongoing communications with social workers, the police and children's services.
- The charity were encouraged to apply for funding through the Council's Ward Flexibility Funding programme and to enquire of Brookfield Shires Trust and Stockport Homes regarding additional funding streams to support each area across Stockport and the needs of those communities.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee thanked Michelle Williamson for her attendance and presentation.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

5. RESPONDING TO OUR MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Children, Family Services and Education submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update upon the Cabinet's proposed approach to responding to the opportunities, challenges and uncertainty outlined within the review of the medium-term financial plan presented at the Cabinet meeting on the 21st September 2021.

The report included an update on the previous reports to scrutiny and cabinet providing the latest considerations on how we intend to address financial and demand challenges, enable longer term transformation and shared ambitions

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

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- Further integration was being looked at within the service to better co-ordinate and synchronise services into an integrated management system while keeping the capacity and capability at the frontline.

- Clarification was sought regarding the support and funding for asylum seekers and refugees. In response, it was stated that the funding was based upon the number of children being placed in Stockport which was 46 children and would be funded by the Government with a funding formula, that could be claimed back from the Department of Education and the Home Office. At the moment only 10 were placed in Stockport based upon the equitable distribution around the country.
- Were shared services being looked at for the future. In response, it was noted that both authorities were exploring providing and delivering services together with a task and finish group being established.
- The Committee expressed concern regarding the number of times 'shared services with another authority' was referred to within the report. In response, it was stated that nothing had been agreed and the Committee would be kept informed of any developments.
- Enquiries were made regarding the number of vacant posts referred to in paragraph 5.3 of the report. In response, it was stated that the information was not available but would be shared with the Committee in due course.
- Clarification was sought regarding the 'school crossing patrol' and whether these were for primary or secondary schools and the wording 'complex work' referred to on page 78 of the report.. In response, it was stated that the information was not available but would be shared with the Committee in due course.

It was further stated that it would be helpful if future such reports were tailored to the remit of each of the respective scrutiny committees, and that further work be undertaken to ensure that reports were drafted in 'plain English'.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That it be recommended that future such reports be tailored to the remit of each of the respective scrutiny committees, and that further work be undertaken to ensure that reports were drafted in 'plain English'.

(3) That detailed responses be provided to the Committee on the following: -

- a) The number of vacant posts referred to in paragraph 5.3 of the report.
- b) The 'school crossing patrol' and whether these were for primary or secondary schools.
- c) Explanation of the wording 'complex work' referred to on page 78 of the report.

6. DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION UPDATE

A representative of the Director of Education submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update relating to the Director of Education's work experiences to date.

The following comments were made/issues raised: -

- The Committee welcomed the detailed report, the reassurances and openness from the Director of Education.

- Welcomed the Task and Finish Group that had been established to look into 'Sexism and Misogyny in Stockport School with racism and bullying included which was raised by the Committee at the last meeting.
- Clarification was sought regarding the 'catch up funding' and how it related to the transitioning of the children. In response, it was stated that it was down to individual schools making their own decisions from a discreet pot of monies that could be utilised for the maximum impact for the children.

RESOLVED – (1) That Lynn Perry be thanked for attending the meeting and answering questions on behalf of the Director of Education.

(2) That the report be noted.

7. SCRUTINY REVIEW UPDATE

A representative of the Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the 'Supporting Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing and Counselling in Schools' Scrutiny Review that was in held in April 2021.

The following comments were made/issues raised: -

- The Committee welcomed the update and commended the officer team for the work done to date to respond to the recommendations following the review.
- It was good to see the strategic updates and the accountability standards included as part of the updates back to the Committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That Heidi Shaw and the team be thanked for the good work in response to the Scrutiny Review

(2) That the report be noted.

8. SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPIC SELECTION

A representative of the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal & Democratic Governance) invited the Scrutiny Committee to confirm the Scrutiny Review topic for 2021/22 and to nominate members to sit on the confirmed Scrutiny Review.

The Committee were informed that in light of the newly established Task and Finish Group to look into 'Sexism and Misogyny in Stockport Schools (including racism and bullying)' it was proposed that the Scrutiny Review be no longer required and that the Task and Finish Group be requested to provide an update to the Committee at a future meeting.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Committee confirm that the "Strategy for School Places – Pupil Place Planning in the Borough' Scrutiny Review be held for 2021/22.

(2) That Councillors Linda Holt (Lead Councillor); Becky Senior, Anna Charles-Jones and Gary Lawson be nominated to sit on the confirmed scrutiny review panel.

(3) That the 'Sexism and Misogyny in Stockport Schools (including racism and bullying)' Scrutiny Review be no longer required.

(4) That the Task and Finish Group established to look into the 'Sexism and Misogyny in Stockport Schools (including racism and bullying)' be requested to provide an update to the Committee at a future meeting.

9. 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.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm.