

## **CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting: 24 November 2021

At: 6.00 pm

### PRESENT

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

### **1. MINUTES**

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 13 October 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
Linda Holt	Agenda Item 4 – Portfolio Performance and Resources – Mid-Year Report 2021/22 by virtue of employment.
Andy Sorton	Agenda Item 7 – Future High Street – StockRoom, as his partner was employed in the Library Service in Stockport.
Wendy Wild	Agenda Item 8 – School Sufficiency Investment Plan, as a School Governor at a Primary School.  Agenda Item 10 – Scrutiny Review Update – Children and Young People’s Participation as a member of the National Trust.
Anna Charles-Jones	Agenda Item 8 – School Sufficiency Investment Plan, as a School Governor at a Primary School.

### **3. CALL-IN**

There were no call-in items to consider.

#### **4. SCRUTINY REVIEW UPDATE - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION**

A representative of the Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the "Children and Young People's Participation" Scrutiny Review that was held in April 2021.

Carolyn Anderson apologised on behalf of the Youth Council who had attempted to join the meeting remotely, but had some technical difficulties.

Members thanked the young people for their involvement, engagement and participation in the review and for those whose voices wanted to be heard and welcomed the suggestion for the Youth Council to attend future meetings to share engagement ideas and discuss key issues relating to children and young people.

It was noted that the actions arising from the Scrutiny Review and engagement with the Youth Council were being considered as part of the development of the Local Plan and also involved the Autism Ambassadors working on a guide for autistic young people in Stockport.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That Carolyn Anderson and the team be thanked for the follow up work relating to the Scrutiny Review.

(3) That the Youth Council be invited to attend future meetings to share engagement ideas and discuss key issues relating to children and young people.

#### **5. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - MID-YEAR REPORT 2021/22**

The Director of Children's Services and the Director of Education submitted a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) providing a summary of the progress in delivering the portfolio priorities, reform programmes and other key projects in the first half of the year, with a particular focus on the second quarter (July to September).

The report included forecast performance and financial data (where this is available) for the Portfolio, along with an update on the portfolio savings programme.

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:-

##### **Priority One**

- Regarding CFSE.2, why is the percentage lower than last year. It was reported that mother's breastfeeding was important and the aim was to get the target higher, but the ambition across Stockport with colleagues in the health sector was to have a realistic target and to raise the standard.

- Reflecting on the analysis of the Early Years consultants' it was identified that the 'highest level of need was social communication difficulties and sensory needs'. What impact has this had on the child's development. In response, it was stated that the information was not available but that a written response would be shared with the Committee in due course.
- Regarding the Start Well and School Readiness Strategy 2020-2023, there is a reference to the 'aim of reducing the waiting time for assessment and intervention' and was there an update as to the progress. In response, it was stated that this was being monitored monthly through the SEND Board with the last update being that the waiting list was being reduced, but there was still a lot of work ongoing to provide children with a better offer.

### Priority Two

- Regarding CFSE.28 and the % of young people in academic years 12 and 13 (16-18) in Apprenticeships and was the percentage lower than the previous year due to Covid. In response, it was stated that the reduction reflected a wider national trend and has been impacted by the pandemic.

### Revenue – Cash Limit

- Clarification was sought regarding the 2 bed provisions on the Broadfields site and the weekly costs. In response, it was stated that the volume of money being spent was a concern and was being looked at year on year, however, the figures were not just for Stockport but across the country, as there were often no places available in Stockport. It was further stated that the 2 bed provisions were for young people with complexed needs and was considered to be value for money. It was noted that the Competition and Marketing Authority (CAMA) had been commissioned by the Government to investigate the companies that provided the service and an update on the CAMA findings would be shared with the Committee at a future meeting.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a detailed response be provided to the Committee on the impact on a child's development relating to the analysis of the Early Years consultants' findings that the 'highest level of need was social communication difficulties and sensory needs'.

(3) An update be submitted to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee relating to the findings of the CAMA investigation into the companies that provided the service relating to placements for children and young people.

## **6. STOCKPORT SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

With the consent of the Scrutiny Committee, this item was withdrawn.

## **7. STOCKPORT SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

A representative of the Chair of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board (SCPB) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing information relating to Stockport continuing to build on the strong partnership foundation to meet the many challenges facing agencies in ensuring that not only children and young people keep safe, but also improving the outcomes for the most vulnerable children in Stockport.

The Scrutiny Committee were informed that Gill Frame had now resigned as the Chair of the SCPB and that Gail Hopper had been appointed as the new Chair of the SCPB with effect from November 2021.

Members expressed their thanks and appreciation for Gill Frame and her role as Chair of the SCPB for the last three years and her involvement in all the positive changes made to the SCPB.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **8. FUTURE HIGH STREET - STOCKROOM**

The Corporate Director (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive, and Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on progress with Stockport's Future High Street Fund project, Stockroom.

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:-

- Sustaining Stockroom in the long term was a concern and what would happen to the library if Stockroom failed. In response, it was noted that a lot of work had gone into Stockroom as a concept and similar projects around the northwest that were successful were researched e.g. Bracknall, Barnsley, Rochdale, Manchester Library and Chester and the footfall had increased.
- There were currently a number of empty retail units in Stockport, but what the borough needed was a flagship superstore to attract people to Stockport to spend money. In response, it was commented that if there were superstores that were looking for a site, contact would have been made already, however, a number of superstores/chains around the country were closing on the high streets as it was an outdated concept with more and more people shopping online.
- The existing and proposed developments in Stockport Town Centre relating to Stockroom, Next, M&S Employment Unit, Mersey Innovation Centre, Leisure facilities at Redrock and the relocation of Stepping Hill Hospital would impact the smaller units and decrease footfall which could potentially close these units.
- It was noted that there would be an increase in footfall with these existing and new proposed developments which could have the opposite effect increase footfall and the demand for more units.

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- Clarification was sought relating to £14.5m fund from Government and the cost to taxpayers in Stockport for the Stockroom development. In response, it was stated that the capital costs would be £400,000, with the revenue costs being cost neutral, with some modest income generation.
- It was commented that the children's promise sets out that 'public libraries would welcome children from the very earliest months, helping parents and carers to support their child as they grow'.
- Information was sought relating to the consultation and what the views were of the young people that were engaged. In response, it was noted that 82% of young people who completed the survey were between the ages of 15-17 years old, with 65% who thought it was a good idea, 31% were unsure, 4% thought it was a bad idea and 37% who said it would make them more likely to use the library if it was moved.
- A number of focus groups were conducted involving parents with school aged children, people with disabilities, older people, younger people, members of the library staff, the Youth Council and the Leaving Care Group.
- Sensory issues were increasing in young children and the first 1,001 days to 5 years old were important to a young child and given that there were no 'sensory rooms' in Stockport with the nearest one being in Wythenshawe and a lack of changing rooms with a hoist. It was noted that the proposed 'sensory room' in Stockroom would be the only one in the borough with the changing facilities being accessible for all.
- Members enquired about the use of the purpose built classrooms in the Stockport Museum that were designed for young people. In response, it was stated that a written response would be provided to the Committee.
- Members welcomed some of the good initiatives that were planned for Stockroom as part of the proposals for the children and young people in the Borough.
- Members enquired about Stockroom and the provisions for young people to be in a quiet and calm space for those who may want to study with all the proposed activities including cafes, office space, a wedding venue and the impact this would have on other businesses locally. In response, it was noted that Stockroom was a substantial size similar to that of a football pitch with different floors identified for different purposes including quiet spaces for young people, autism friendly spaces, meeting rooms, café space, with the design supporting the lack of sound moving around the venue.
- It was noted that regarding the impact on other businesses, a consultant was being used to look at the space and the impact on other businesses.
- Was there any confusion relating to the consultation and objections in the petition regarding what was being asked. In response, it was stated that the consultation carried out was to understand the impact on the proposals and consider the mitigation of anything negative. A number of methods were used including online and face to face surveys and focus groups as set out in the report.
- It was noted that the Council did receive a number of petitions that had already been formally responded to and sought to clarify with the petitioners that the proposals were not for a reduced library service but rather for an enhanced library service.
- Buildings were important including the traditional ones and take into account the current Central Library where young people feel safe, secure and peaceful primarily for books with a librarian. As part of the proposals why not modernise the library similar to Manchester Library and then move all the other services that were needed into Stockroom.

- The proposal would be massive for Stockport and it would be important to listen and take the public on the journey even if it means tweaking the plans along the way to respond to the views of the public.

MOVED AND SECONDED – That the Cabinet be recommended to not proceed with the relocation of library services from Central Library.

For the motion 5, against 4

MOTION CARRIED

MOVED AND SECONDED - That a site visit to both sites be arranged (proposed site for Stockroom and existing site of Central Library) to understand the scale and size of both sites, to understand what it means to have special educational needs and to understand their journey.

MOTION CARRIED (UNANIMOUSLY)

It was then

RESOLVED – (1) (5 for, 4 against) That the Cabinet be recommended to not proceed with the relocation of library services from Central Library.

(2) That a site visit to both sites be arranged (proposed site for Stockroom and existing site of Central Library) to understand the scale and size of both sites, to understand what it means to have special educational needs and to understand their journey.

## **9. SCHOOL SUFFICIENCY INVESTMENT PLAN**

A representative of the Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out how the Council would carry out its responsibility, in line with the commitments made in the One Stockport Borough Plan, to ensure that there were sufficient school in places in good and improving local inclusive schools at the heart of the community that children and families want to go to. This meant having the right number and type of school places, in the right place, at the right time to meet demand. The School Sufficiency Investment Plan aims to secure an education estate that provides a safe, accessible, secure and stimulating learning environment, which was sustainable and provided value for money, was fit for current and future needs, and reduces environmental impact.

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

Members expressed their concerns with the underspend relating to the last 5 years and the major works that had not been undertaken e.g. replacing windows, distribution piping, lighting, new fire alarm system and fixed wiring.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **10. SHARED SERVICES PROGRAMME UPDATE**

A representative of the Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the progress with Tameside and Stockport's shared services programme which aimed to improve outcomes for children and families by delivering the best possible services through challenging times and within diminishing resources, supported through an emphasis on collaboration and partnership. The programme aimed to explore and realise the opportunities to do things differently to build capacity and share best practice across traditional boundaries. It also provided an update on outcomes of a scoping exercise that took place over the Summer 2021 and the recommendations for a phased approach to reviewing opportunities for shared services.

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

Members welcomed the update and thanked officers for the update.

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 following comments were made/issues raised: -

- The report on Anti-Social Behaviour Statistics has been deferred to the next meeting in January 2022.
- Arrangements are now in place for the Scrutiny Review to proceed and further updates would be submitted to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.
- Proposal for the meeting on 02 March 2022 to be moved to 01 March 2022 due to a religious holiday.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) The Scrutiny Committee meeting on 02 March 2022 be moved to 01 March 2022 due to a religious holiday.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.