

CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 14 June 2023

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Colin Foster (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Janet Mobbs (Vice-Chair); Councillors Shan Alexander, Jake Austin, Dallas Jones, Becky Senior, Leah Taylor, David Wilson and Wendy Wild.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 01 March 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

Councillor

Interest

Wendy Wild

Agenda Item 5 – ‘Portfolio Performance and Resources – Draft 2023/24 Agreement as a Governor of a Primary School.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES REPORT: QUARTER 4/YEAR-END

A representative of the Corporate Director of People and Integration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing details relating to the 2022/23 Portfolio Performance and Resource Agreement (PPRA), which was considered by the committee on 7 September and approved by Cabinet on 28 September 2022 and also provides a comprehensive summary of progress against portfolio priorities, performance indicators and budgets during 2022/23, but with a specific focus on the fourth quarter (January to March 2023).

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education (Councillor Wendy Meikle) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

Portfolio Introduction

- Clarification was sought regarding the proposed new Lisbon School build and the family hub. In response, it was stated that it was planned to be opened in the next academic year following the building being burnt to such an extent that it required considerable building work.
- Members enquired about the 'business case' relating to the 3-bed and 5-bed children homes to increase local sufficiency. It was stated that two sites had been identified and the re-acquisition of the properties was being progressed accordingly.

Priority 1 - All babies and children are given the very best start in life by their parents and carers and start school ready to learn

- Members welcomed the detail in the report and recognised how useful the information was for the Committee.
- Clarification was sought regarding what the 'transition conversations' were. It was noted that it related to the teams around the early years settings and the discussions that would take place to support transition between the settings.
- It was noted that regarding the 'Start Well Sessions' that 196 families were booked onto sessions, however, only 111 families attended. It was stated that the sessions were universal and were up to parents to access the sessions with no limits for attendance.
- Members enquired about what was being done to promote and advertise the 'Healthy Start Scheme' and what was the uptake. In response, it was stated that the teams were proactively promoting the scheme through midwifery, health visitors and was a targeted approach. It was noted that the details of the uptake were not available, but would be shared with the Committee following the meeting.

Priority 3 - All children, young people and families have access to an effective integrated early help offer

- Clarification was sought regarding the context relating to the 'decline of converting the Early Help Assessments and plans of support. In response, it was stated that it could vary from no longer needing an assessment or following discussions with family no longer want to take it forward, but was constantly being reviewed and monitored.

Priority 4 - Children and families with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) receive the best possible support at the right time to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved

- Members enquired about 'CFE63, EHCP issued on time' and why had it been decreased. In response, it was stated that not only had there been a decrease but the demand had been increased since Covid. It was also noted that there were challenges with recruiting educational psychologists nationally, which then had a knock-on effect with completing assessments.
- It was noted that there was about a 37% increase in demand relating to EHCPs and that there were about 437 EHCPs yet to be finalised.

- Clarification was sought regarding a breakdown between the traditional EHCPs and those that related to mental health. It was noted that the greatest demand was 'autism' and 'neuro-diversity' mainly, but the greatest demand was around emotional, social and mental health concerns.

Priority 5 - All children and young people live safely and happily within their families, there are fewer family breakdowns, and rates of crime and anti-social behaviour reduce

- Members enquired about the 'remand grant overspend'. It was noted that the grant for 2022/23 was £36k from the Ministry of Justice, but that one remand for murder and other things cost £86k, so there was an overspend of just over £50k. The remand grant was small but with even low numbers in remand, it only takes one child being in remand for a lengthy time and this increases the spend.
- It was noted that there was a substantial increase in the 'looked after children' following coved and was the expectation that it would be continuing to rise. It was stated that it already had a significant impact and there was a complexity of demand with the families, but also there had been an increase in unaccompanied asylum seekers through the national transfer. Assurance was given regarding the priority within the service.
- Clarification was sought regarding the figures relating to educational attainment for SEND, however there were no figures for 'looked after children'. It was noted that the figures would be included in a future report and would include a summary of data.

Financial Resources and Monitoring

- Members enquired about the increase in pupils and transport routes outside of the borough. It was stated that the figures would be provided to the Committee following the meeting.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the details of the uptake for the 'Healthy Start Scheme' be shared with the Committee.

(3) That the figures relating to educational attainment for 'looked after children' be included in a future report and include a summary of data.

(4) That the figures relating to the increase in pupils and transport routes outside of the borough including the number of children that have been placed outside of the borough be provided to the Committee.

5. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - DRAFT 2023/24 AGREEMENT

A representative of the Corporate Director of People and Integration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing details relating to the draft 2023/24 Agreement for the Children, Families and Education Portfolio.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education (Councillor Wendy Meikle) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

Priority 2 - All children and young people are well prepared for adulthood and engage in education, employment, and training

- Clarification was sought regarding the accuracy of the CFE25 and CFE28 figures which was impressive. It was noted that it was the statutory responsibility of the authority to track 16-18 year olds, through information from colleges, training providers and apprenticeships. Where the information was not available then the team would go out and seek the information from the young people and their families.
- Members enquired about how Stockport could work with providers across Greater Manchester to improve the offer and provisions. It was noted that this was already being progressed through developing and implementing a post-16 plan with colleagues across Greater Manchester.
- It was noted that the delivery plan would be within this municipal year and before March 2024.
- Members requested that regarding the outputs of 16-18 year olds and the vagueness of the data, that an additional PI be included relating to the 'destination data of the 18 year olds and their further education'.

REOSLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That consideration be given to including an additional PI in future reports relating to the 'destination data of the 18 year olds and their further education'.

6. SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPIC SELECTION

A representative of the Assistant Director – Legal & Democratic Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out a suggested process for the selection of scrutiny review topics and an explanation as to how the reviews would be supported.

The Committee was invited to choose a topic for their next review.

Members proposed the following the topics-

- SEMH & EHCP referrals
- Skills and Technical Education – mapping routes, post-16 plan
- Services for Young People – including youth services

It was noted that Skills and Technical Education would be included in the Post-16 Plan that would be submitted to the Committee at a future meeting.

RESOLVED – (1) That the members of the Scrutiny Committee be invited to submit their preference for the next review to the Democratic Services Officer following a scoping meeting, as soon as practicable from either (1) SEMH & EHCP Referrals or (2) Services for Young People.

(2) That following the submission of suggestions authority be delegated to the Assistant Director – Legal & Democratic Governance, in consultation with the Chair, to recommend to Council the next scrutiny review and to appoint members to the Panel as necessary.

7. AGENDA PLANNING

A representative of the Assistant Director - 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 – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Assistant Director - Legal & Democratic Governance be requested to make arrangements for the following items to be programmed onto the agenda for future meetings of the Scrutiny Committee:-

- Alternative Provisions for KS4 – secondary phase (private/providers/external providers/growth in EHCP, progress into Post-16 educational training)
- Post-16 Plan
- Virtual School Update
- Maintained Nursery Schools within the Borough
- Persistent absenteeism and actual missing children

The meeting closed at 7.19 pm.