

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 15 JANUARY 2014

PRESENT:- Councillors Maureen Penny (Chair), Emma Faramarzi, Cindy Matthews, James Robbins, Nadine Watts, Steve Weisinger, Paul Baker, Michael Bray, Ann Richards, Joe Tray, Mark Edwards, Alan Bishop and Wayne Crabbe.

Co-opted Representatives: - Dick Mattick (National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers), Rachael Matthey (Swindon Association of Secondary Headteacher), Andrew Wild (Church of England Diocese), Paul Sunners (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) and Jackie Smith (Swindon Association of Special School Headteachers).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Colin Lovell, Melanie Sancto (Swindon Association of Primary School Headteachers) and David Dawson (Catholic Church Diocese).

Also Present: Councillor Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Children's Services).

26. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Maureen Penny (Chair) declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 6 (Children's Services Performance Report) as she was a member of the Fostering Panel and the Corporate Parenting Advisory Board.

Councillor James Robbins declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda item 5 (Fostering) as he was a foster carer.

27. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th November 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

28. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

29. Standards and Provision

The Board Director Commissioning, Children and Adults and the Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment submitted a joint report on performance and standards in maintained schools and academies across Swindon. Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment introduced Gill Illic, Commissioner, Education, who outlined the successes, areas for development and challenges to be addressed to ensure every school in Swindon was successful for all its students.

Ms Ilic informed the Committee that the report included aspects of provision relating to attendance and exclusions and summarised strategies being implemented to improve provision within the Borough. She referred to the successful alliance between the teaching schools in Swindon and Her Majesty's Inspectorate and advised that the teaching schools were developed to support the local schools in their demand for services, with stronger links being forged with South West schools, to aid and improve service provision.

The Committee welcomed the improvements in 2013 and Mr Bradley and Ms Ilic responded to questions put by members regarding the following points:

- Rapid improvement does not always produce sustainable results. The Committee noted that the goal of improvements would need to emphasise consistent progress to ensure long term sustainability. The Committee heard of the support available for schools within a rapidly changing environment.
- Education Improvement Strategy and academy accountability. The Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment explained that Ofsted monitored academies and whilst it was the Local Authority's Statutory Duty to ensure the overall wellbeing of pupils, it was unable to intervene directly in the running of an academy. He referred to stronger parent engagement in schools that would identify and react to issues if and when they arise.
- Addressing the disadvantaged attainment gap. The Committee noted how the pupil premium was being utilised, particularly through work between the Teaching Schools and the Teaching Alliance, on ways to raise attainment for pupils, particularly those receiving free school meals. The Committee further noted that pupil premium usage is monitored.
- As Corporate parents, the actions being undertaken by the Borough to ensure looked after children get the full benefit of the pupil premium.
- The processes being implemented to assist young people who did not get support at home that are aimed to reduce disadvantage.
- The work being undertaken by the teaching schools as conduits to support local schools in response to current education reforms.
- The recruitment and training of school Governors and their influence and impact on schools' work.
- The Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) and Cognitive Abilities Tests (CATS) scores of pupils between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4 – Difference in pupils' levels between the two Stages.

Resolved: (1) That the Commissioner, Education, be thanked for her informative report.

(2) That a report on the work of the Research and Improvement Group be submitted at a meeting of this Committee during the next Municipal Year.

30. Children's Services Performance Report

The Board Director Commissioning, Children and Adults and the Head of Commissioning, Children and Adults, presented a report updating the Committee on the final performance outturn for Children's Services for the period to September 2013. Sue Wald, Head of Commissioning, Children and Adults, advised the Committee that the report had been structured to highlight the strengths and challenges of the work to be undertaken and referred to the Early Help Record Plan that had been well received by commissioners.

Ms Wald, with Jo Olsson, Interim Head of Children and Families, responded to the Committee's queries regarding the following points:

- Actions being undertaken to support Children Centres who had not performed well during an Ofsted inspection.
- The work being undertaken by the Adoption Team to respond to the challenges in that area.
- Clarification of the reasons for the increase in the number of contacts to social care; were increases year on year; did they correlate to family issues; were there any increase in young people having a second plan.
- The impact of local and national issues on the local data.
- Schools powers to address absenteeism at schools.
- Reasons behind the increase in the number of exclusions in Swindon and how this was being addressed.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

31. Children's Services Revenue Budget Monitoring Position 2013/14

Steve Haley, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, introduced a report to inform Members of the Committee of the latest projected outturn position on the Children's Services 2013/14 Revenue Budget. Mr Haley explained the reasons why some budget holders had not submitted their forecast spend figures and Nina Potter, Finance Manager, Children and Adults explained the work being undertaken to reduce the overspend.

The Committee considered the report and commented on the following points:

- The impact of an increase in referrals. Nina Potter, Finance Manager, Children and Adults commented on the recruitment drive to have staff in post for the next financial year. She advised that staff recruited through agencies skewing the referrals data.
- The underspend in the Dedicated School grant that would be ring-fenced to help schools next year.
- Changes in formula on how schools obtained Central funding. Steve Haley, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation explained how funding allocation would be "pupil led" and this may affect school staffing.

Resolved – That the projected outturn position on Core and Dedicated Schools Grant Funding, be noted.

32. Work Programme 2013/14

The Committee received a report from the Director of Law and Democratic Services detailing its updated work programme for the Municipal Year 2013/14.

Resolved - (1) That, the Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment, be requested to submit a report on Skills and Employment Strategy to a meeting of this Committee in the next Municipal Year.

(2) That the "Out of Borough Task Group" be granted an extension to continue their work and for a report to be submitted to a meeting of this Committee in the next Municipal Year.

(3) That Members of the Committee be requested to put forward suggestions to be included in the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2014/15.

33.

Any Other Business

The Committee referred to the BBC Panorama programme on 13th January 2014 regarding family courts and guardianship. Jo Olsson, Interim Head of Children and Families responded to questions submitted by the Committee regarding children taken into care following admittance to hospital and confirmed that these were rare cases and Swindon was unaffected.

Resolved - That the Interim Head of Children and Family be requested to report to the Committee in the next Municipal Year on the issue of care admissions.