

**MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE,  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALSALL COUNCIL HOUSE.**

**Thursday 29 June 2023 at 6.00 P.M.**

**Committee Members present:**

Councillor S. Ditta (Chair)  
Councillor P. Gill  
Councillor S.B. Hussain  
Councillor N. Latham  
Councillor E. Morgan  
Councillor L. Rattigan  
Councillor P. Smith  
Councillor C. Towe

**Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor Mark Statham – Education and Skills

**Officers Present:**

Sharon Kelly - Director Access and Inclusion  
Rob Thomas - Head of Access  
Judith Nash – Head of SEND  
Lorraine Thompson - Virtual School & Vulnerable Groups Lead  
Jack Thompson – Democratic Services Officer

Welcome and introductions were made.

**01 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor P. Kaur and I. Hussain.

**02 Substitutions**

There were no substitutions of this meeting.

**03 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

**04 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no agenda items requiring the exclusion of the public.

## **05 Minutes**

Subsequent to the agreement of the minutes, Councillor Smith asked for clarification on how co-opted Members were elected and what their voting rights were. The Democratic Services Officers responded that he would email Members of the Committee explaining the process of elected/appointing co-opted Members and then voting rights in due course.

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on the 28 March 2023 were submitted [annexed].

### **Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2023 a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.**

## **06 Areas of focus for 2023/24**

At the invitation of the Chair the Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills outlined their priorities as portfolio holder for the municipal year and to make any suggestions for items the Committee could include on its areas of focus.

The Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills outlined his priorities which fell under the Walsall Right 4 Children framework. This framework would continue to be delivered through work with partner organisations. These partnership relationships included the Walsall Learning Alliance, Local Area Improvement Board and Walsall Employment and Skills Board. In addition, the Portfolio Holder updated the Committee on the EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) team, informing the Committee of the hiring of new staff to the team and the reduction in the backlog of EHCPs and reduced time in processing current applications. Furthermore, the Council had also successfully hired senior staff for the Education Psychology Team despite the nationally recognised shortage of the education psychologists. A strong inclusion agenda would be launched in September to ensure that all education settings within the Borough were meeting the needs of children. The Education Team would focus on improving the local offer over the coming year and develop a more seamless service delivery. Moreover, the Council was working to improve its offer for skills and apprenticeships. The Council had offered the most apprenticeships out of any members of the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Council was also working build on the success of the Vulnerable Learners Hub (VLH) which had recently changed its name to the Inclusion Hub. Finally, Councillor Statham informed the Committee the number of schools within the Borough with a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' Ofsted was now above the national average.

Members expressed their congratulations to the Access and Inclusion Team for the improved Ofsted ratings.

The Director of Access and Inclusion, Sharon Kelly, along with fellow Access and Inclusion Officers took the Committee through a presentation on the directorate (see annexed).

In responses to questions from Members following the presentation included:

- The Council recognised that areas of Borough were deprived;
- There had been improvements across the Borough in recent year, such as in early years;
- Deprivation had moved around the Borough geographically over time;
- The Council would focus on areas that needed additional support;
- The Borough had seen improvements in Ofsted ratings;
- An audit of early years services within the Borough had found that struggling services did not follow deprivation in the Borough and the picture was more mixed;
- The Education Investment Area Board was set up by the Department for Education and they decided the funding levels for the Education Investment Area;
- There was an action plan for the Education Investment Area and £3 million would be spent based on the 2019 data and this showed that key stage 2 and 4 were the worst performing;
- The funding through the Education Investment Area would focus on maths, reading, writing and early years support and a third of the schools within the Borough would get targeted support.

There being no further questions, the Chair invited Members of the Committee, the Portfolio Holder and Officers to suggest items for the Committees Work Programme for the municipal year 2023/24.

The following items were suggested:

- Attendance;
- Children Missing in Education (CME);
- Exclusion and Suspensions;
- SEND Developments inc EHCPs;
- Inclusion Hub;
- Transitions;
- Learning Recovery;
- Specialist Provision Plan inc SEN school places;
- Mainstream Pupil Place Planning and Capital Strategy;
- School Admission;
- Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring & Budget Setting 2024/25;
- School Attainment Data;
- Ofsted Data and Outcomes;
- Schools Causing Concern;
- Skills Strategy and Development;
- Post 16 Provision;
- Alternative Provision;

- School Readiness and Early Year Foundation Stage Outcomes;
- Early Years SEN (Special Educational Needs);
- Childcare Sufficiency and Plans.

The Director of Access and Inclusion noted the suggested items from members and suggested that these should be put into themes so that similar or linked items could be discussed at a future meeting together and would allow members to explore them in more detail.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

- 1. The following items be agreed as the Committees Areas of Focus for 2022/23:**
  - a. School Attendance;**
  - b. Children Missing in Education (CME);**
  - c. Exclusion and Suspensions;**
  - d. SEND Developments inc EHCPs;**
  - e. Inclusion Hub;**
  - f. Transitions;**
  - g. Learning Recovery;**
  - h. Specialist Provision Plan inc SEN school places;**
  - i. Mainstream Pupil Place Planning and Capital Strategy;**
  - j. School Admission;**
  - k. Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring & Budget Setting 2024/25;**
  - l. School Attainment Data;**
  - m. Ofsted Data and Outcomes;**
  - n. Schools Causing Concern;**
  - o. Skills Strategy and Development;**
  - p. Post 16 Provision;**
  - q. Alternative Provision;**
  - r. School Readiness and Early Year Foundation Stage Outcomes;**
  - s. Early Years SEN (Special Educational Needs);**
  - t. Childcare Sufficiency and Plans.**
- 2. That the suggested items be thematically grouped.**
- 3. A copy of the completed work programme for the year be circulated to Members.**

**07     Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting would be 5 September 2023.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 19:42.

Signed:

Date: