

## **EDUCATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**18 JUNE 2019 AT 6.00 PM AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE, WALSALL**

**Committee Members present:** Councillor Lee Jeavons (Chair)  
Councillor Gazanfer Ali  
Councillor Daniel Barker  
Councillor Rose Burley  
Councillor Brian Douglas-Maul  
Councillor Sat Johal  
Councillor Pard Kaur  
Councillor Sally Neville

**Portfolio Holders present:** Councillor Chris Towe – Education & Skills

**Non-elected non-voting Members present:** Mr Russ Bragger (Primary Teacher Representative)

**Officers present:** Ms Sally Rowe, Executive Director -  
Children's Services  
Mrs Sharon Kelly, Assistant Director -  
Access & Achievement  
Dr Paul Fantom, Democratic Services Officer

### **36/19 WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair welcomed all in attendance and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Mr Russ Bragger advised that this would be the last meeting of the Committee he would attend as the Primary Teacher Representative and that from the September meeting this position would be occupied by Ms Sharon Guy. Mr Bragger was thanked by the Chair and Members for his contribution over a number of years to the work of the Committee

### **37/19 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Sarah Jane Cooper and Lorna Rattigan.

### **38/19 SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Sally Neville substituted for Councillor Sarah Jane Cooper.

### **39/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

#### **40/19 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 (AS AMENDED)**

There were no agenda items that required the exclusion of the public.

#### **41/19 MINUTES**

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2019 was submitted [annexed]. Further to the nineteenth paragraph of Minute 30/19 (page 9), it was noted that the third line should be amended to read 'building was being adapted...'

#### **Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2019, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

#### **42/19 OPENING REMARKS FROM MEMBERS**

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Chris Towe, welcomed the Chair to his first meeting of the Committee and outlined the work of the Children's Services Directorate in relation to education services. This included the continued focus to ensure Walsall's children had the best start in life, so that they could fulfil their potential and make the best contribution to their communities. He referred to and highlighted the principles of the Walsall Right for Children Transformation programme launched in September 2018, which aimed to make sure that the right children were in the right place and for the right amount of time. He also noted that early health partnership arrangements had been strengthened by co-locating key professionals within localities for a more joined up solution-based offer to be made to children and families. There had been work with partners for Operation Encompass, with schools and the Police sharing information when children are at risk of domestic abuse. Mrs Sharon Kelly had been appointed as Assistant Director – Access & Achievement and would work with schools, partners and Members to deliver transformation plan ensuring children and young people in Walsall received the quality of education they deserved.

It was pointed out by Councillor Towe that in February 2019 a joint Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities was undertaken. Nine significant areas of concern being identified, the Council and Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were required to produce a written statement of action specifying how these would be rectified, with progress to be monitored quarterly by the Department for Education (DfE). It was indicated that 40 per cent of all local authorities inspected and four of Walsall's seven neighbouring local authorities had been required to submit written statements since 2016.

The Assistant Director - Access & Achievement, Mrs Sharon Kelly, provided the Committee with an update, explaining that there had been a meeting with the DfE and the agreement of three submission dates for draft written statements in order to gather feedback before the final submission was made. She noted that a detailed critique had been received on the first draft submission, which was developed with partners, parent groups and staff, and that a very positive response had been received from the DfE.

Councillor Towe advised Members that in relation to his concerns regarding the readiness of children entering education, he had written to all parents of children being offered a place in Reception in September 2019 to set out a number of expectations. He informed the Committee that had had received support on this initiative from infant and primary schools in the Borough and that he and senior officers would continue to visit Walsall's schools to ensure children and young people had the best opportunities to succeed.

Councillor Rose Burley referred to the non-inclusion on the agenda of an item on the Jane Lane School and enquired whether the action plan for the School had been circulated and, if so, she requested that a copy of the document be made available to her. The Committee was advised that the business of the municipal year's first meeting of the Council's scrutiny committees was devoted to preparing their work programmes for the year and that a report on the Jane Lane School would be made to the meeting to be held on 3 September 2019.

#### 43/19 **AREAS OF FOCUS 2019/20**

The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director – Access & Achievement, Mrs Sharon Kelly, featuring information concerning the following:

- **Walsall Right for Children Vision**  
This vision underpinned everything being done in access and achievement, and that two streams of work would be followed, namely access and inclusion, to provide sufficient school places and the right provision, and to fulfil statutory responsibilities to ensure good quality education, including via the schools causing concern protocol.
- **Information on the schools in Walsall**  
It was reported that 122 state-funded schools are located in the Borough (with the Ladder free school being established in 2018) and all schools are RAG rated in terms of performance. In terms of Ofsted inspection outcomes, it was noted that whilst improving, this was below national levels and that work over the year would be carried out to identify schools causing concern and how best to support them.
- **Information on the children living in Walsall**  
It was noted that the Borough had a number of challenges and that whilst improving, academic outcomes for Walsall children were still below national levels, which was attributable to factors including the high levels of deprivation in the Borough and given that significantly more children having English as an additional language.
- **A brief profile of children with SEN in Walsall**  
The Ofsted inspection of SEN had taken place, and it was stated that the number children and young people requiring an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) rose from c. 1300 in 2015 to c. 2000 in 2019, and continued to increase. Seven special schools are situated in the Borough and to ensure that the right schools are providing what is required, this would be a part of an access review of pupil place planning.
- **Structure chart - the Access & Achievement component of Children's Services**  
During the SEN inspection, SEND Information, Advice and Support (SENDIAS) was found not to be independent and relocated to the remit of the Assistant Director – Early Help, Youth Offending, Commissioning, Transformation & Business Support.

- **The key issues in relation to the provision of education services in Walsall**
  - Improving the numbers of good and outstanding schools
  - Gap in educational outcomes – below average in all areas – raising aspirations
  - Fragmentation of the educational landscape and changing role of local authorities
  - Pressures in the SEND sector and increased needs of children and young people
  - Joining skills agenda and employment with school activity to prepare for work
  - Vulnerable pupils – Children Missing Education (CME) and Children Missing from Education (CMfE)
  - Exclusions – higher than the national average across all key stages
  - Pupil place planning – planning for future need
  - Making the most of external funding opportunities
  - Partner engagement in the schools agenda, including joint commissioning
  - School readiness and early years development
- **Items for consideration by the Committee for its work programme**
  - Educational attainment
  - Ofsted inspections
  - Vulnerable pupils – CME and CMfE
  - SEND inspection written statement of action (WSOA)
  - Access strategy, including school organisation and pupil/provision planning
  - Inclusion strategy, including schools causing concern (SCC)
  - Pupil exclusions
  - Post-16 provision, IAG and development of skills agenda
  - Joint commissioning.

It being noted that the membership of the Committee contained a number of newly elected Members of the Council, Mrs Kelly indicated her intention to offer a workshop session specifically on education, Ofsted, schools and educational outcomes.

The Committee was then invited to ask questions on the presentation.

Further to a question regarding the Head of SEND and Inclusion, it was confirmed that the post holder was currently absent from work due to illness. With respect to EHCPs, and whether there was relaxation in approach regarding timescales, it was pointed out that need had increased and timeliness required further improvement. Mrs Kelly referred to the re-prioritisation, additional resource allocated and the restructuring of the SEND team, with a number of new appointments being made, to address this. It was also reported that the current paper-based system was to be replaced by the 'EHCP Hub' electronic system, which was used by other authorities, and the Committee was informed of the short and longer term steps being taken to introduce this by the end of the year. The Executive Director – Children's Services, Ms Sally Rowe, reminded Members of the importance of remembering that schools had responsibility for the delivery and quality of education, and resources to support SEN children were devolved to schools via high needs funding, and engagement with the EHCP process was driven at local level by the schools.

Having regard to questions from the Committee relating to vulnerable pupils and pupil exclusions, Mrs Kelly added that there were two aspects to exclusions. Firstly, child-led needs and the necessity of finding out the reasons for the vulnerability and/or exclusion; and secondly, schools-led needs that required challenging.

In response to a question on the achievement of good and outstanding ratings by schools, Mrs Kelly outlined key aspects of the schools improvement process and the roles played by school governors, head teachers and school leaders to maintain and be accountable for the quality of education provision. The role of the Local Authority was to monitor by a 'light touch' approach and be assured that weaknesses are being addressed and capability is improved; however, should improvement not be as required, then support would be provided by the Authority, and it could use the powers of intervention provided by the Secretary of State.

The Chair drew Members' attention to the *Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities* that had been produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which was appended to the Areas of Focus report [annexed]. This document set out in seven sections guidance that authorities should have regard to; however, the only requirement was for authorities to establish a co-option scheme to determine how individuals are co-opted onto committees. The Scrutiny Overview Committee, which considered this document at its meeting on 13 June 2019, had resolved to establish a session on 16 July 2019 facilitated by an external trainer from the LGA, with subsequent feedback being provided to that Committee at its next meeting.

Turning to the Areas of Focus report [annexed], the Committee received a summary from the Democratic Services Officer, Dr Paul Fantom. This included the requirement of formulating the work programme, explanations for the benefit of new Members regarding the business of the Committee, for example, the budget reports and forward plans, the Council's Corporate Plan priorities and their links to the Committee, and the previous successful establishment of working groups that produced reports making effective recommendations that were duly considered and approved by the Cabinet.

The Committee proceeded to consider those areas that it wished to focus on during the municipal year and which would be incorporated into the Committee's work programme for 2019/20. Suggestions from Members included:

- The Committee's relationship with parents
- SEND inspection and written statement of action
- Pupil exclusions
- Vulnerable pupils
- Children missing education and children missing from education
- EHCPs
- Teacher recruitment (especially regarding the workload friendly approach to recruitment and whether this can be encouraged in schools)
- School funding and SEN funding (and the balance between them)

The Committee also agreed to establish a minimum of one working group for the 2019/20 municipal year, with the topic of access and inclusion being agreed. It was noted that should this topic be broadened out too much, there could be some possible overlap with the work of the Corporate Parenting Board and the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which could lead to unnecessary duplication and was to be avoided.

The Committee determined the items to be placed on the agenda for its next meeting, together with the names of those persons to be invited to attend the meeting for specific items of business.

**Resolved:**

1. That the following areas of focus be incorporated into the Committee's work programme for 2019/20:
  - Education, Health and Care Plans
  - Teacher recruitment (especially regarding the workload friendly approach to recruitment and whether this can be encouraged in schools)
  - School funding and SEN funding (and the balance between them)
  - Educational attainment
  - Ofsted inspections
  - Vulnerable pupils – Children Missing Education (CME) and Children Missing from Education (CMfE)
  - SEND inspection written statement of action (WSOA)
  - Access strategy, including school organisation and pupil/provision planning
  - Inclusion strategy, including schools causing concern (SCC)
  - Pupil exclusions
  - Post-16 provision; information, advice and guidance (IAG); and development of the skills agenda
  - Joint commissioning
  - The Committee's relationship with parents
2. That a working group be established for 2019/20 in respect of Access and inclusion, with a membership comprising:
  - Councillor Daniel Barker
  - Councillor Rose Burley
  - Councillor Sat Johal
  - Councillor Pard Kaur
3. That a finalised work programme be presented to the next meeting for approval by the Committee.
4. That the following items should be placed on the agenda for the meeting to be held on 3 September 2019:
  - Update on Jane Lane School (With attendance by the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, Mr Tim Gallagher and a representative of the parents' forum).
  - Update on teacher recruitment
  - Budget report
  - Work programme

44/19 **FORWARD PLANS**

Members considered the Work Programme and the Forward Plans of the Council and the Black Country Executive Joint Committee [annexed].

**Resolved:**

That the revised Work Programme and the Forward Plans be noted.

45/19 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was 3 September 2019.

The meeting terminated at 7.24 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....