

CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

TUESDAY 29 JULY, 2014 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Panel Members Present

Councillor B. Cassidy (Chair)
Councillor R. Martin (Vice Chair)
Councillor E. Hazell
Councillor E. Hughes
Councillor P. Lane
Councillor D. Shires

Non elected voting Members present

S. Rayner (Lichfield Diocesan Education)

Officers Present

Rose Collinson - Interim Executive Director
(Children's Services)
Sue Butcher - Interim Assistant Director (Specialist
Services)
Andrea Potts - Assistant Director (Early Help,
Children's Commissioning & Workforce Development)
Ian Cruise Taylor – IYPSS Delivery Manager - Acting
Strategic Lead for Positive Activities
Debbie Sylvester -
Karen Marcroft - QA and Performance Information
Manager (Head of Service)
Neil Picken – Senior Committee Business and
Governance Manager

413/14 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Mr R. Bragger, Councillor T. Jukes and the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services - Councillor M. Arif.

414/14 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

415/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting.

416/14 MINUTES

Members considered the minutes of the meetings held on 8 and 29 April, 2014.

The Chair requested that the briefing note, detailing the number of reasons for persistent absence and permanent exclusions from school, as requested at the meeting

held on 8 April, 2014 be circulated to Members. The interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that this would be carried out.

The Chair advised that she had written to the Leader detailing the issues identified in her visit to the Multi-Agency Screening and Initial Response Service, as recommended by the Panel at the meeting held on 29 April, 2014.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 and 29 April, 2014, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

417/14 OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES & CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY

The Chair sought the Panels approval to consider item 6 – Overview of Children's Services and Item 7 – Children's Services Improvement Activity together. The Panel agreed.

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) delivered a presentation (annexed) providing an overview of Children's Services. In doing so, an offer of support was made to all Members of the Panel should they wish to discuss any aspect of the presentation following the meeting or at any point in the future. This was echoed by the Assistant Directors and Officers at the meeting.

Specific mention was given to:-

- The fact that PARIS (the computer system used for document management) would be replaced by 'Core Logic';
- The increased importance and role of the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board given that the Improvement Board would no longer operate as the Improvement Notice had been lifted;
- The importance of the Scrutiny Panel following up and following through on its working group investigations;

A Member of the Panel raised concern that there was considerable change both in terms of senior management and political leadership at a time when stability and retaining experience was crucial to maintaining the good work undertaken which resulted in the Improvement Notice being lifted.

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that the Improvement Notice had been lifted through collective work which included Members and staff at all levels within the service. It was suggested that the Panel request updates on Walsall's self assessment of services for help and protection, looked after children and care leavers as well as support for school improvement and youth justice quarterly to monitor and challenge.

Further discussion ensued as to the importance of Members on other Boards such as Health and Wellbeing addressing and championing issues for children and young people. It was suggested that a Member from the Clinical Commissioning Group be invited to a future Panel meeting. This was supported by the Panel. The Interim

Executive Director (Children's Services) advised Members that there would be a transfer of public health commissioning responsibilities for 0-5 year olds from NHS England to local authorities on 1st October, 2015. This would include commissioning responsibility for:-

- Health visiting services (universal and targeted services);
- Family Nurse Partnership services (targeted service for teenage mothers).

It was agreed that a briefing note be circulated on this matter to Members of the Panel.

Members sought clarity on when the new Executive Director (Children's Services), David Hayley, would commence employment and what transition arrangements were in place? In response the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that he would start in September and a handover would take place. The Chair advised that there wasn't a requirement for a 'new broom' as the new Director needed to build on existing strengths. The new Director was aware of this and on board.

A Member of the Panel raised concern that due to the fact that a lot of emphasis had been placed on safeguarding and lifting the improvement notice, education matters had been placed on the 'back burner'. It was stressed that education should form part of the Panels investigations throughout the municipal year. The Chair advised that the results of the recent school improvement Ofsted inspection were due to be published soon and would need to form the core of the work programme for the coming year.

A discussion ensued relating to the recent lifting of the Improvement Notice and the consequent disbanding of The Children's Improvement Board. Officers explained that its roles and responsibilities would be taken on by the existing Walsall Safeguarding Children Corporate Parenting Boards. Members requested that an overview of the Boards, together with membership be circulated to them. The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) agreed to circulate the information.

A Member of the Panel asked for more information regarding a comment in the report for item 7 which, in relation to Thresholds, stated that '*work was being undertaken with staff and partners to improve decision-making on thresholds where evidence suggests that too low a threshold is being applied*'. The Interim Assistant Director (Specialist Services) advised that a Threshold document which was fit for purpose was in place. Work was required to ensure that Thresholds were applied consistently. Improvements had already been made as Health colleagues were now situated within the Multi Agency Screening Team which provided a new perspective on Thresholds. Further work would be carried out within schools.

Members turned their attention to the performance scorecards (one distributed with agenda and a further, Panel specific version, tabled at the meeting). Clarity was sought regarding table 4 which detailed staffing measures, particularly the headcount figures. The QA and Performance Information Manager (Head of Service) advised that further information identifying long term trends may be of use to a future Panel. The Interim Assistant Director (Specialist Services) explained that every effort was being made to recruit social workers and an active recruitment campaign was ongoing. Efforts were also made to convert agency workers to full time staff, however, this was difficult as many people chose to be agency staff. Further, efforts were continuing to 'grow our own' staff and a number of newly qualified social workers were approaching the end of

their assessed year in practice which meant they would be able to take on a higher, more complex caseloads which would ease pressure within the system. More widely, across the West Midlands discussions were being held as to how much agency staff were being paid to try to achieve consistency. It needed to be accepted that agency staff fulfilled an important role and that there would always be a demand for them. As such efforts were required to look at ways of retaining and looking after them to reduce movement between authorities and retain their experience.

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) added that the replacement ICT system would assist with recruitment and retention as the existing PARIS system was not well regarded and was a barrier to prospective employees.

The Chair suggested that a performance surgery would provide opportunity for Members of the Panel to delve further and better understand the statistics provided on the scorecard. The QA and Performance Information Manager (Head of Service) welcomed this approach. It was agreed that a performance surgery take place at 5.30 on the 9 September, 2014

Resolved:-

1. That an item 'Walsall Self Assessment of Services' be added to the work programme to be reported to Panel quarterly;
2. That a representative from the Clinical Commissioning Group be invited to a future meeting;
3. That the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) circulate a briefing note to Members on the transfer of public health commissioning responsibilities for 0-5 year olds from NHS England to local authorities on 1st October, 2015;
4. That the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) circulate an overview of the Boards which would be responsible for varying work streams following the cessation of the Improvement Board together with Membership details;
5. That a Performance Surgery be arranged to take place on 9 September, 2014 at 5.30 p.m. at the Council House

418/14 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2013/14 (PRE-AUDIT)

The Panel considered the revenue and capital outturn position for 2013/14 [Annexed].

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that key pressures related to the increase in Looked After Children and associated staff costs. Revenue monitoring during the 2014/15 financial year indicated a more positive picture.

The Chair noted with concern the overspend of £2.377m during 2013/14 and advised the meeting that Early Help and Looked After Children would be the two areas of delivery which would place the service under the most pressure in the coming year.

A discussion followed on the number of LAC placed out of borough. Clarification was provided that, in the main, this was within 20 miles of the Walsall Border although it was

accepted that one CYP was placed as far away as Dundee, however, this was in the best interests of the child. Members questioned whether children and young people placed so far away remained the responsibility of Walsall Council as Walsall Social Workers were required to travel to undertake visits which would be quite costly. This was confirmed to be the case by the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services).

Resolved

That the 2013/14 year end financial position for services within the remit of the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel be noted.

419/14 INTEGRATED YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUPPORT SERVICES; SERVICE OVERVIEW, PERFORMANCE, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES AND IMPACT OF BUDGET REDUCTIONS/BRIEFING NOTE ON ENCOURAGING/PROVIDING APPRENTICESHIPS.

The Integrated Young People Support Services Delivery Manager - Acting Strategic Lead for Positive Activities presented a report [annexed] detailing the proposal to establish a Integrated Young People Support Services (IYPSS) not for profit body which would intend to operate as a Youth Mutual in Walsall.

In presenting the report, it was explained that moving to a Youth Mutual would provide opportunity to attract investment which was unavailable to the Council. It would also realise savings for the council over a four year period.

A Member registered their surprise, as this was rare, that the report had been brought to Scrutiny prior to Cabinet. Further, it was explained that there was a worry that the service could be setting off in a direction of travel that wasn't fully tested. It was possible that this was a good, pioneering approach, however, given that this was a time of great change and uncertainty, both politically and managerially within the council it may not be the best time to embark on such an adventure. In the absence of a great deal of reassurance and a solid business case the panel unanimously agreed that it was not possible, at this stage, to support the establishment of a Youth Mutual.

The IYPSS Delivery Manager - Acting Strategic Lead for Positive Activities advised that a business case would be developed for submission to Cabinet on 10 September, 2014. The Chair endorsed the comments made previously by a Panel Member and stated that she could not support the establishment of a Youth Mutual given the information available as there appeared to be sufficient detail relating to the benefits of a not-for-profit model but nothing regarding the effect of such an outcome on existing 3rd sector providers.

The IYPSS Delivery Manager - Acting Strategic Lead for Positive Activities advised that other authorities, such as Oldham, had successfully made the transition and that they had increased turnover and accessed funding not available to local authorities.

A Member queried how the proposed 40% reduction in budget could be achieved. In response, the IYPSS Delivery Manager - Acting Strategic Lead for Positive Activities advised that this would be developed prior to the submission of the report to Cabinet.

It was asked whether staff would be transferred using TUPE should a Youth Mutual be established? It was confirmed that 126 staff would be transferred under a TUPE agreement.

In relation to the operation of the Youth Mutual it was confirmed that the Council would contract manage, setting targets for the Youth Mutual to deliver. The contract would also stipulate any penalties for not delivering agreed outcomes.

The Chair stated that she was uneasy with the proposals and there was a need to know more before a decision could be reached such as what exactly would be delivered, by whom and how the change could impact upon service delivered within Walsall. Further, it wasn't clear how the change would benefit the service and users nor was it evidenced how the 40% savings would be realised and how the 3rd sector would be better supported.

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) suggested that a briefing note may assist Members with further detail in a simpler format which highlighted the key areas of concern as raised by Members. This would include the cost of current delivery, partnership arrangements and other alternatives available. The Panel agreed to this suggestion and requested that the matter be revisited at the Panel meeting scheduled to be held on 9 September, 2014.

Resolved

1. That it be noted that the Panel are unable to support the establishment of an Integrated Young People Support Service not for profit body which would intend to operate as a Youth Mutual in Walsall as the information, as contained within the report, is not sufficient to inform a decision at this time requiring more detail regarding the impact on existing providers across the Borough;
2. That the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) provide a briefing note containing further detail in a simpler format which highlights the key areas of concern as raised by members to include the cost of current delivery, partnership arrangements and other alternatives available;
3. That the Panel supports the undertaking of further work as necessary to finalise the Cabinet report with a business case for the commissioning of IYPSS services from a not-for-profit body;
4. That the matter be considered further at the Children's and Young People Panel to be held on 9 September, 2014;

And;

5. That the content of the report be noted;

420/14 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel considered a report [annexed] detailing the contribution of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) to quality assuring and improving services for children in care.

The Interim Assistant Director (Specialist Services) presented the report and explained the role of IRO's. In doing so it was explained that there had been 82 fewer cases in 2013/14 than 2012/13. Members were made aware that over recent months there had been more discharges than children and young people admitted into care.

It was highlighted that there was a large number of children and young people at home under a care order and this was being looked at in more detail. It was further noted that, in relation to children's and young people's views, children under 4 were not recorded, however, it was the IRO's opinion that they could express their view and these should be recorded. This again was being looked into.

In closing the Interim Assistant Director (Specialist Services) advised that profile of IRO/Conference Chair team was not yet representative of Walsall's cultural mix, or the gender ratio of Walsall's Looked After Children population. The eight permanent staff were all white women whilst one of the two agency staff was from a BME background and the other a white male. This again was under consideration as it was important to work to better reflect the demographic.

The Chair thanked the Interim Assistant Director (Specialist Services) for the report which was well laid out and informative. These thoughts were echoed by other Panel members. The Chair advised that the report would be considered annually by the Panel.

Resolved

That the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual report be noted.

421/14 WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the work programme and forward plan (annexed). The Chair drew the panel's attention to a revised work programme which had been tabled at the meeting [annexed].

A discussion took place regarding the replacement of the PARIS system with Core Logic. Officers offered to invite Members to workshops which would be taking place during the summer so that they could acquaint themselves with the system.

Resolved

1. That the work programme, as tabled, and forward plan be noted;
And;
2. That the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advises Members of the dates of workshops on the new ICT system 'Core Logic', when agreed.

422/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as 9 September, 2014

The meeting terminated at 8.00 p.m.

Chair:

Date:.....