

CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

TUESDAY 14 OCTOBER, 2014 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Panel Members Present

Councillor E. Hughes (Chair)
Councillor P. Lane (Vice Chair)
Councillor A. Andrew
Councillor C. Clews
Councillor E. Hazell
Councillor T. Jukes
Councillor K. Phillips
Councillor D. Shires
Councillor S. Wade

Portfolio Holder present

Councillor B. Cassidy

Non elected voting Members present

S. Rayner (Lichfield Diocesan Education)

Non elected non voting Members present

R. Bragger (Primary Teacher Representative),
D. Blackwell (Secondary Teacher Representative)

Officers Present

David Haley - Executive Director (Children's Services)
Lynda Poole - Assistant Director (Access and Attainment)
Tony Griffin - Interim Assistant Director (Social Care)
Robert Lake – Independent Chair of Walsall Safeguarding Children Board
Jane Bonner – Interim Head of Service for School Improvement
Alan Michell – Head of Walsall Youth Support Services
Neil Picken – Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager

436/14 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R. Martin and T. Wilson.

437/14 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

438/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

439/14 MINUTES

Members considered the minutes of the meetings held on 9 September, 2014.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September, 2014, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

440/14 **SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND POST OFSTED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN**

The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) presented a report [annexed] setting out an update on progress made with the post Ofsted Action Plan. In doing so, Members were invited to contact her directly, at any point, if they wished to discuss this or any other matter within her remit.

The panel was advised that a number of key priorities, identified from the inspection, provided the focus of the action plan. As part of the process, the School Improvement Strategy had been praised and also used to develop the action plan.

Governance and improving leadership and management were highlighted as crucial elements to improving attainment. Significant work had been undertaken around banding and data and target setting. Every element of work maintained a focus on the post Ofsted action plan.

It was acknowledged that there a huge task lay ahead for officers, schools and elected Members. A new data sheet had been established which would enable senior management to monitor schools, to share successes, hold underperforming schools to account and ensure that appropriate school to school support was identified and implemented. Work was being undertaken to develop school to school support and improve the traded services offer from the Local Authority.

Discussion ensued on the recently developed Walsall School Improvement Board and its membership. The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) advised that membership of the board would be ratified by the Independent Chair of the Board. Once this had been carried out, details of membership would be circulated to the Panel.

A member of the panel asked for further details on the recruitment drive to appoint school governors. They also sought clarity as to whether school to school support included Governor to Governor support, pairing weak governors with stronger governors to support and develop individuals. The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) confirmed that additional Governors were placed in schools, when required and that 32 new governors had also recently been appointed. A review was being undertaken to develop school governors and revisit the size of the Boards within schools. The Interim Head of Service for School Improvement advised that a number of events took place each year, including Governor Awareness week which took place during November. Local businesses were also being approached to encourage their staff to become Governors. A database was being developed to identify skills gaps within Boards of Governors and the Council was beginning to broker support from other Governing

Bodies. In closing, Members were assured that where there concerns in relation to Governors a review was undertaken.

In relation to the overall delivery of the Action Plan, it was asked whether there was sufficient capacity within the Council to lead and deliver the priorities. In response, the Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that it was a huge task but it needed to be delivered. It was anticipated that Ofsted would revisit within a year and challenge the council to demonstrate and evidence the impact made and outcomes achieved. Two key posts were expected to be recruited to shortly, a Head of Governor Services and Head of School Improvement.

The Chair questioned how the panel would be made aware of progress and of any issues which may be causing delays? The Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that progress would be reported to the Performance Improvement Challenge Board. He explained that the leadership team knew where the stresses were and that acknowledged that a better system was required, with greater collaboration with schools.

The Chair emphasised that there remained a great deal. He expressed concern at the current state of provision within Walsall emphasising that children and young people only had one chance at education. Whilst it was important to focus on the task ahead this should not be at the detriment of children's learning. The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) reassured the panel that the action plan contained nothing that schools shouldn't be undertaking already.

In terms of the organisation of schools, the Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that schools were currently clustered. It was proposed that each cluster be reduced in size to work more closely together. It was also important to ensure that sufficient capacity was left in schools rated 'good' to maintain and improve that status.

A Member of the panel sought assurance that gifted and talented pupils would be supported. The Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that this was an area which needed a higher profile as providing effective support for gifted and talented pupils was this was just as important as focussing on individuals that were underperforming.

Resolved:-

That membership of the Walsall School Improvement Board be circulated to Members, once agreed by the Independent Chair.

441/14 CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

The panel considered a report (annexed) providing an overview of the role and function of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) advised that the Board had a new Chair, Councillor Cassidy, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and that the Board would meet on the 15th October, 2014. This would be the first meeting for both himself, as recently appointed Assistant Director (Social Care) and the Portfolio holder (Children's Services).

In terms of the Boards history, it was explained that it had not been as effective as it could have been. This was being addressed and a number of proposed changes were under consideration including a proposal to establish a sub-group for each theme which would have specific responsibilities to ensure that actions are implemented.

Members were advised that a Virtual Head had been appointed and would soon be in post. This appointment was seen as key to the success of the virtual school for which the Board had overarching responsibility for.

In light of the fact that neither the Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) nor the Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) had yet attended a meeting, the panel were asked to consider the matter again in January, 2015.

The Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) addressed the panel stating that attendance by other Partners at the Board, such as housing providers, required improvement as historically, attendance had been poor. She reiterated that a further report in three months time would provide a more detailed and informed update.

The Chair of the panel questioned whether children and young people attended the Corporate Parenting Board as their views were of particular importance. If not, he recommended that this should be addressed. The Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) agreed.

A member of the panel queried whether the panel should take responsibility for specific care homes, acting as a champion and undertaking visits. The Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) supported the suggestion. He advised that the Corporate Parenting Board would be looking at how best to use regulation 33 visits and that including elected Members would be a positive step. An update on this matter would be considered by the panel in January, 2015.

A member of the panel asked how private care homes operating in Walsall were inspected. The Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) explained that there were inspection frameworks in place, however, the matter would be considered further and an update provided in January, 2015.

The Executive Director (Children's Services) explained that social events for members to engage with children and young people would assist in building relationships, encourage open dialogue and enable young people's voices to be heard.

Resolved

That an item be added to the work programme to consider Corporate Parenting Board in January, 2015.

442/14 USE OF PUPIL PREMIUM

The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) gave a presentation [annexed] which identified:-

- KS2 Pupil Premium Outcomes;

- KS4 Pupil Premium Outcomes;
- Pupil Premium Rates;
- Walsall Allocations;

Members noted that Ofsted Inspectors had undertaken pupil premium reviews in 6 schools. The findings of the reviews were expected in December, 2014 and would be shared with Members.

The Chair questioned how Pupil Premium was spent to which the panel were advised that use of pupil premium should be reported at each Governor meeting. Information should also be listed on each schools website. A handbook was being produced for schools to provide advice on pupil premium and this would be circulated to Members, once available.

The panel raised concern that many parents would not notify the school that they required assistance due to the fact that all children in Reception to Year 2 would receive free school meals under the Universal Infant Free School Meals policy. Officers advised that schools reminded parents to apply in correspondence. The Panel suggested that more should be done to encourage parents to apply at key stage 2. This could include sending parents the form for completion rather than notifying them that they were available at the school.

Recommendations

1. That the outcome of the Ofsted reviews into Pupil Premium be shared with Members of the panel once published.
2. That the Pupil Premium handbook be circulated to Members of the panel once available.

443/14 CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The Independent Chair of Walsall Safeguarding Children Board, together with the Interim Assistant Director (Safeguarding), presented a report [annexed] detailing the work of the Walsall Safeguarding Children Board.

The report sought to provide assurance that all appropriate action was in place across the Council and Partners to safeguard children and young people.

The Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) requested the Chair's agreement to have an extract from 'See Me, Hear Me' circulated to the panel. This was agreed and the clerk to the panel was requested to circulate the information following the meeting.

A member sought clarity as to who should be contacted if they had a safeguarding issue to report. The Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that any concerns should be reported to the Multi Agency Screening Team (MAST). Members commented that more could be done to raise awareness of the MAST together with details of how and when to contact them.

Discussion followed on engagement with local taxi drivers. The panel were advised that there was direct liaison. The Council also had a licensing function arm which was a good route for communication.

A member of the panel questioned how authorities knew how many young people were missing. The Independent Chair of Walsall Safeguarding Children Board advised that they received regular reports on the number of children that were missing and confirmed that there was a figure. In doing so, he stressed that there were very few categorised as missing. He emphasized that it was important to learn and understand what happens to young people during the period that they go missing and return home. The Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) advised that the Council had a contract with Barnados which undertook return interviews with young people. This was independent to the Council and encouraged young people to open up. The process helped to build a richer picture, over time, as to the reasons behind young people going missing.

Resolved

1. That the 'See Me, Hear Me' extract be circulated to Members of the panel; and
2. That the update be noted.

444/14 INTEGRATED YOUNG PEOPLES SUPPORT SERVICE: FIT FOR THE FUTURE

The Head of Walsall Youth Support Services presented a report [annexed] which provided an overview of the range of services delivered. This included geographical location, related budgets, purpose and relationship to statutory requirements. The report also set out the next steps in the context of the corporate budget setting cycle.

The Head of Walsall Youth Support Services advised members that the name of the service had been changed. Previously Integrated Young People Support Services, it was now Youth Services. The service had been evaluated to look at how resources could be best allocated to target resources effectively.

The Chair asked how provision was allocated to which he was advised that there were a basket of indicators that were used in a formula taking into account deprivation and population.

The Chair expressed concern that areas such as Streetly would suffer a loss of provision as it was not an area of deprivation. The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) advised that provision through alternative providers was being considered such as schools delivering the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

This was challenged by a member of the panel who suggested that a lot of young people were keen to undertake activities away from school. In addition, provision of the Councils youth services was too structured which wasn't what young people wanted. There was a need to look at provision run by other providers to learn what young people want. The Head of Walsall Youth Support Services advised that there was a balance to be struck between structured and non structured provision.

Members of the panel raised a number of matters including:-

- Concern that provision was not consistent – elements were very good, however, there was a need to improve provision for younger children;
- Concern that the youth facility planned in New Invention would not be delivered in light of the budget pressures - The Head of Walsall Youth Support Services advised that there had been a slight issue and that further development was being reviewed as part of the budget process.
- Concern that the Allens Centre project would be delivered to which the Head of Walsall Youth Support Services advised that he would provide an update to the member, following the meeting.
- An observation that provision was tailored to educating young people about contraception. It was stated that there needed to be more provision which allowed children to be children.

The Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) advised that the budget for children's services as a whole was very challenging with almost half of the existing budget being removed over the next few years. There are a number of statutory services that the council has to provide such as looked after children and safeguarding which meant there would be less to be spent on other areas, such as youth services. There was a need for a root and branch reform to inform how services could be operated differently in future. It was of the utmost importance to involve young people in this process to ensure that services that they want are those delivered.

The Head of Walsall Youth Support Services re-assured the panel that young people were central to the decision making process and would be fully consulted on proposals both now and in future.

Resolved

That the Head of Walsall Youth Support Services provide an update to Councillor A. Andrew, on the Allens Centre Project.

445/14 CARE LEAVERS WORKING GROUP

The panel considered the final report of the Care Leavers Working Group [annexed].

The Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) stated that the final report was a brilliant piece of scrutiny.

The Chair explained that it had been very beneficial to visit and meet both care leavers and frontline staff as it provided valuable insight into how services really operated. A further member of the working group thanked staff involved for their time and effort in making the working group viable.

The Chair made it clear that Members of the Working Group would revisit young people to ensure that their voices continued to be heard.

The Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that the recommendations of the working group would be developed into an action plan. A further report providing an update on progress would be brought to the panel in January, 2015.

Resolved

That a report detailing the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the working group be considered by the panel in January, 2015.

446/14 WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the work programme and forward plan (annexed).

A member requested that a Fostering and Adoption Working Group be established. The Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager sought nominations. The following members indicated that they wished to be appointed to the working group:-

- Councillor T. Jukes
- Councillor P. Lane
- Councillor D. Shires
- Councillor K. Phillips

Resolved

1. That a Fostering and Adoption Working Group be established;
2. That Councillors T. Jukes, P. Lane, D. Shires and K. Phillips be appointed to the Working Group;
3. That the Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager draft an initiation document for approval by the panel at the meeting scheduled to take place on 25th November, 2014.
4. That the work programme and forward plan be noted.

447/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as 25 November, 2014.

The meeting terminated at 8.10 p.m.

Chair:

Date:.....