

CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

TUESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER, 2014 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Panel Members Present	Councillor R. Martin (Vice Chair in the Chair) Councillor E. Hazell Councillor E. Hughes Councillor T. Jukes Councillor P. Lane Councillor D. Shires
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
Officers Present	David Haley - Executive Director (Children's Services) Keith Skerman - Interim Executive Director for Social Care & Inclusion Lynda Poole - Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) Tony Griffin - Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) Andrea Potts - Assistant Director (Early Help, Children's Commissioning & Workforce Development) Robert Lake – Independent Chair of Walsall Safeguarding Children Board Dan Mortiboys – Senior Finance Manager (Head of Schools Finance) Jane Bonner – Interim Head of Service for School Improvement Colin Teasdale – Principal Corporate Performance Officer Carol Williams – Head of Programme Delivery Sue Parkinson - Programme Manager - Business Change Neil Picken – Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager

Prior to commencement of the formal agenda, the Vice-Chair, Councillor Martin thanked Councillor Cassidy, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and previous Chair of the Panel for her dedication to improving children's services. She commented that Councillor Cassidy had her work cut out, having received a Government Improvement Notice during her tenure. Councillor Cassidy was thanked for her diligence in challenging to ensure the children of Walsall were well protected, safe and that improvements to educational standards were carried out. She congratulated Councillor Cassidy in her new position as Portfolio Holder of Children's Services stating that in her hands things are safe and improving.

The Vice-Chair then expressed thanks to Rose Collinson and Sue Butcher who provided strong leadership and a proactive 'can do' attitude with a desire to improve the status quo. She commented that both Rose and Sue were instrumental in systematically lifting the council from the Government Improvement Notice and installed the foundations and building blocks the council needs to go forward.

The Vice-Chair then welcomed David Haley, Executive Director (Children's Services) and Tony Griffin - Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) advising that they would be expected to underpin and carry forward the work of their predecessors.

423/14 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

424/14 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

425/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

426/14 MINUTES

Members considered the minutes of the meetings held on 29 July, 2014.

It was noted that Lynda Poole (Assistant Director -Access and Attainment) should have been included in the list of those having attended the meeting.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 July, 2014, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record subject to Lynda Poole (Assistant Director -Access and Attainment) being added to the list of attendees.

427/14 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Panel considered the Children and Young People Annual Complaints report which provided an overview and analysis of all complaints and compliments received together with a summary of the issues that arose [annexed].

The Principal Corporate Performance Officer advised that the most common reasons for complaints were poor communication, disagreement with information contained in assessments and reports, and delays in the time taken to receive services. A total of 166 complaints had been investigated between April 2013 and March 2014, compared to 111 in the previous financial year – an increase of 50%. Members were advised that

there had been a 45% reduction in complaints, in year, when compared to the 2013/14 figures.

In response to a question asking why there may have been a large increase, the Principal Corporate Performance Officer advised that whilst it was only speculation, it may be due to a reaction to the Ofsted inspection which meant that officers used the formal complaints process instead of resolving the matter at the earliest opportunity. The complaints procedure had been revised in January, 2014 to focus on early resolution and it was anticipated that the number of formal complaints would reduce. The new process included more emphasis on direct contact with the complainant and manager and focussed upon learning from complaints. Managers now met on a monthly basis to consider and learn from them.

The Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) commented that learning from complaints required managers to have clear expectations of what was required of them. He assured the Panel that this would be the case moving forwards. The opportunity to discuss complaints at monthly Operational Manager meetings worked well as it encouraged learning which was then disseminated to teams.

Members also heard that Council4Kids had been engaged to seek their views on the complaints process. Arising from discussion with care leavers a set of golden rules were developed which the young people would like staff to follow when handling a complaint. These had been cascaded to managers and incorporated into training sessions.

The Chair asked whether it would be possible to include comparisons with previous years within future annual complaints reports as that would enable Members to compare, contrast and identify any trends which may emerge which could identify areas of concern. A further Member echoed the point adding that Members needed to be assured that the complaints process was effective and that changes made in January, 2014 had been embedded. The Principal Corporate Performance Officer agreed to improve future reports but advised that changes in recording practice made comparisons with previous years difficult.

A Member asked what impact the huge savings required would have on the complaints service? The Principal Corporate Performance Officer advised that the focus for the future was on early resolution. There was a need to resolve matters at the first point of contact, wherever possible, as this was better for the complainant and less time consuming for all concerned.

The Executive Director (Children's Services) explained that complaints were a very important indicator of the quality of services. Early intervention was key together with having appropriate steps for escalation in place. The Principal Corporate Performance Officer was requested to provide a briefing note for Members providing context and trends over a three year period, to date.

Members further requested that a further report be submitted to the Panel on 24th February, 2015 detailing the impact of the revised procedure implemented in January, 2014 and how it operates in comparison to the previous system.

The Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) sought clarity as to whether the complaints report included complaints made to schools. In response, the Interim Head of Service for School Improvement explained that such complaints were not included as part of the

report. The complaints team did assist with co-ordination, however, complaints were redirected elsewhere. The agreed policy, together with guidance for parents wishing to make a complaint would be circulated to the Panel.

The Vice-Chair queried whether the implementation of MOSAIC, the replacement case management system for social care, would have an impact on the number of complaints? The Principal Corporate Performance Officer advised that communication between parents and the team was important. The existing system, PARIS, created difficulties in entering, maintaining and updating records which in turn led to complaints. The new system should appease this, however, there were often complaints when officers were following due process and so managing customer expectation should not be overlooked.

Resolved:-

1. That the Principal Corporate Performance Officer provide a briefing note providing context and trends on complaints over the last 3 years;
2. That a further report be submitted to the Panel on 24th February, 2015 detailing the impact of the revised procedure for complaints, implemented in January, 2014, and how it operates in comparison to the previous system.
3. That literature including the Policy adopted, be circulated to Panel Members with regard to the process undertaken should parents wish to complain about Schools.

428/14 QUARTERLY FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Senior Finance Manager presented a report [annexed] summarising the predicted revenue and capital outturn position for 2014/15 based on the performance for quarter 1 (to end of June 2014), for services within the remit of the Panel.

Members were advised that the forecast revenue outturn was an overspend against budget of £1.215m (net of the use of earmarked reserves and action plans). Members were advised that Children's Services continued to develop action plans and reduce expenditure to balance the budget across the service. As at the end of June, 2014 £2.898m of potential action was identified, half of which had been achieved in quarter one. This left £1.376m still to be realised before the end of the financial year.

A Member made reference to recent investigations as part of the Care Leavers Working Group during which it became apparent that there may be a funding shortfall in relation to 'Staying Put' arrangements within Walsall. The Senior Finance Manager agreed to look into the matter and provide a briefing note to the Panel.

A Member further asked whether the forecast was achievable. The Senior Finance Manager explained that the budget had been developed with previous senior managers which identified certain cases to be reconsidered. There was a finance pressure related to the types of placement which needed to be revisited.

The Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that it was difficult to make accurate predictions. It was important to aspire to have the right people in the right placements. Members were advised that the budget would need to be re-profiled.

Resolved

1. That the Senior Finance Manager provides a briefing note on funding available for 'Staying Put';
2. That the report be noted.

429/14 CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY INCLUDING THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) together with the Interim Head of Service for School Improvement provided a presentation on the school improvement action plan together with unvalidated school results.

Members were advised that the inspection findings were published during the school holiday period, which was unusual, and that the findings of the inspection could be found on the school improvement inspection report which was available on the Ofsted website. It was confirmed that the arrangements for supporting school improvement in Walsall had been rated 'ineffective'. The Panel were advised that there were only two outcomes from the new inspection regime, either 'ineffective' or 'effective'. Despite receiving a rating of 'ineffective' there were pockets of good practice within Walsall.

Members were advised that an action plan consisting of six priorities had been produced:-

1. Ensure strong leadership in all Walsall Schools;
2. Ensure the Local Authorities Improvement Strategy is fit for purpose;
3. Ensure that the Local Authority maintains an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the performance of all schools;
4. Ensure a robust and unambiguous approach to school categorisation, intervention and support;
5. Ensure high quality school improvement across all sectors;
6. Ensure effective school to school support across the Local Authority.

The Panel were advised of a number of actions already underway such as changes to the banding system and steps to ensure that a strong data dashboard is implemented. The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) explained that the Action Plan would be circulated to Headteachers. Once agreed, the Action Plan would then be shared with the Panel at a future meeting.

It was highlighted that Boards had been established to hold officers to account to ensure that improvements were delivered. It was suggested that updates from the

School Review Board should be considered by the Panel and added to the work programme. Further, a Walsall Governor Association had been established to strengthen the role of parent governors within schools.

The Panel were advised that Warning Notices would be issued to schools where required.

In closing, it was emphasised that there was a robust action plan together with delivery plans in place to address matters and acceptance across the board that matters need to improve.

A Member of the Panel raised concern that some head teachers could do their own thing as they are able to choose who they purchase services from. Walsall's offer needs to demonstrate its effectiveness, showing the positives on offer in order to persuade schools to use its services. In response, it was agreed that Walsall needed to prove that its services were valuable. Where head teachers did source services elsewhere the Authority had a responsibility to ensure that they were being delivered effectively.

The Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that it was important to deliver going forward. Building relationships with schools to develop strong partnerships and collaborative working was essential as was ensuring that there was a robust and rigorous system to hold schools to account to address underperformance.

A Member questioned whether the Council was selling its services to schools effectively following the termination of the Serco contract and indeed whether the expertise was in place to deliver services? The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) advised that there was opportunity to challenge all services presently on offer to ensure that they are the services that schools want. There was sufficient expertise to deliver, however, it was agreed that there was a need to promote services on offer to schools.

A Member acknowledged that improvement was necessary but cautioned the improvement journey should not impact on schools and teachers to such an extent that it affected their ability to teach. The Panel were assured that the quality of teaching and learning was of the utmost importance.

A further Member queried the Councils approach to school categorisation, particularly the suggestion that the Council would be more robust than Ofsted. In response, the Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) advised that category and bands had been confirmed with every school and that this would be maintained if agreed collectively.

In relation to Academies and accountability, a member of the Panel enquired as to how the Council would engage with them. The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) advised that meetings were being held with sponsors who were being challenged. If an Academy was not performing the Council should be challenging and establishing if they have the correct Sponsor.

The Executive Director (Children's Services) stated that Academies were a part of the same system and the same processes applied. Regional Schools Commissioners had been appointed who would be responsible for challenging Academies going forward. As a Council, officers were doing everything possible to challenge and support Academies.

In relation to school results, the Interim Head of Service for School Improvement explained that they were not validated and that more detailed information would be presented to a future meeting. The Panel were advised that whilst there was improvement in some areas, there was clearly need for improvement.

The Panel recognised that there had been good performance in 'phonics' and congratulated those schools which had performed well. The Panel recognised with concern that Maths was a clear area which required improvement.

The Interim Head of Service for School Improvement advised that there were some clear challenges and every effort was being made to 'drill down' into schools to understand issues and offer appropriate support. Being able to understand what causes dips also enabled better planning.

Visits had been undertaken to all schools within the borough by the Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) together with the Senior Area Improvement Advisor.

Recommendations

1. That the Post Ofsted Action Plan be considered by the Panel at the meeting due to be held on 14 October, 2014;
2. That updates from the School Review Board be added to the Work Programme;
3. That a further report on school results, once validated, be considered by the Panel;
4. The report be noted.

430/14 WALSALL SAFEGUARDING CHILDRENS BOARD

The Chair of Walsall Safeguarding Children Board presented the 2013/2014 Walsall Annual Report [annexed].

Mr Lake advised that the Board needed to be robust as the Improvement Notice had been lifted. In this context the budget for delivery was under pressure. This was exacerbated by serious case reviews which were expensive. Discussions were underway with partner agencies to spread the cost.

Reference was made to Rotherham and child sexual exploitation. Members were advised that in the early part of 2013/14, the Board established a Task and Finish Group to consider how best to respond to growing concerns, nationally as well as locally, about the sexual exploitation of children and young people. The investigation led to the formation of a new Child Exploitation and Missing Children Committee. This committee was tasked with undertaking an audit, in light of events at Rotherham, to establish whether anything had been overlooked in previous years. The outcome suggests that there hasn't been, however, questions were still being asked and a further report would be submitted to the Panel in future.

The Panel were given assurance that the Safeguarding Board was fit for purpose.

A Member referred to the Multi Agency Training Courses and questioned why some hadn't been evaluated. Mr Lake advised that some analysis was taking place and that the information would be updated prior to publication on the internet.

A Member questioned whether conversations had been held regarding the future budget for the Board and how any reductions may impact upon service delivery. In response, Mr Lake advised that it depended on what action is undertaken by the Council to mitigate the impact of future budget reductions. As an authority Walsall had shown the ability to respond to difficulty in the past and he was satisfied that it would utilise its resources to do its best to safeguard children and young people in Walsall.

The Executive Director (Children's Services) emphasised that there would be no tolerance around child sexual exploitation and that every effort would be made to safeguard children and young people ensuring that any information received would be used proactively to eliminate risk.

Mr Lake advised that funding had been secured through the Community Safety Partnership to appoint a Child Sexual Exploitation Coordinator for one year.

Resolved

That:

1. a further report on Child Sexual Exploitation to the Scrutiny Panel to be held on 14 October, 2014;
2. the report be noted

431/14 REPLACEMENT SOCIAL CARE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – MOSAIC

The Interim Executive Director (Social Care & Inclusion) presented a further report, tabled at the meeting (annexed), providing an update on the implementation of the MOSAIC system.

In doing so he explained that the replacement for the PARIS social care management system has been procured, following a robust selection process involving stakeholders from across both Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Inclusion. Children's services would be first to implement the system before it is rolled out to Adult Social Care.

In presenting the report it was highlighted that the new system:-

- Had been tried and tested with over sixty other Authorities using the system;
- Was smart and future proofed;
- Was expected to be delivered in Children's Services by the end of 2014.

On the latter point Members were advised that there may be some slippage with implementation, however, officers were working hard to meet the deadline. Despite time pressures, Members were assured that the new system would be implemented in a safe way.

A Member of the Panel explained that as part of a working group investigation it became clear that entering data into the present system was difficult with officers using a variety of methods. Given this it was asked how data would be merged into the new system successfully? The Interim Executive Director (Social Care & Inclusion) advised that a data cleansing exercise would be carried out which was critical to the success of the new system. A large sum of money had been invested to double check case files both manually and on PARIS. He reiterated that the deadline for implementation was ambitious.

The Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that the new system was imperative to improving services. The case management system need to be implemented urgently, however, there was a balance to be struck between implementing quickly and implementing safely. This would continue to be monitored through the implementation board.

The Interim Executive Director (Social Care & Inclusion) explained that that assurance had been provided that MOSAIC was good product based on the latest technology which could easily be updated and upgraded to meet any new requirements which arise from legislation.

The Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that training sessions would be available for Members to attend to familiarise themselves with the new system. The Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager would liaise with the Programme Manager - Business Change and Members to agree dates.

Resolved

1. That a further report on MOSAIC, the social care management system, be submitted to the Panel on 14th October, 2014;
2. That the Programme Manager – Business Change liaise with the the Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager to arrange training dates for Members on MOSAIC;

432/14 CARE LEAVERS WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

Members of the Care Leavers Working Group provided feedback on their investigations. The Panel were advised that as part of the review Members had met with officers and a number of care leavers to listen to their views and learn from their experiences.

Meetings had also been held with officers such as the Transition and Leaving Care Team and further visits to MyPlace and accommodation for care leavers.

It was explained that the final report should be available for consideration at the meeting of the Panel scheduled for 14th October, 2014.

Resolved

That the final report be submitted to the Panel at its meeting to be held on 14 October, 2014.

434/14 **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].

Resolved

1. That the work programme and forward plan be noted.

435/14 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as 14 October, 2014.

The meeting terminated at 8.20 p.m.

Chair:

Date:.....