

## **CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

TUESDAY 12 FEBRUARY, 2013 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

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| <b>Panel Members Present</b>                  | Councillor B. Cassidy (Chair)<br>Councillor R. Martin (Vice Chair)<br>Councillor D. Shires<br>Councillor T. Jukes<br>Councillor R. Thomas<br>Councillor E. Hughes   |
| <b>Non elected non-voting members present</b> | R. Bragger (Primary Teacher representative)<br>P. Dunn (Secondary Teacher representative)   |
| <b>Portfolio holder present</b>               | Councillor R. Andrew - Children's Services  |
| <b>Officers Present</b>                       | Rose Collinson - Interim Executive Director, Children's Services;<br>Sue Butcher - Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services<br>Frank Barnes - Assistant Managing Director, Participation, Serco<br>Denise Falconbridge - Managing Director, Serco<br>Shannon Moore - Head of Improvement Services, Serco<br>Dan Mortiboys – Senior Finance Manager (Head of Schools Finance)<br>Neil Picken – Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager |
| <b>Also Present</b>                           | Helen Pearcey – Head teacher – St James Primary School  |

### **269/13 APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor G. Perry.

### **270/13 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **271/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

## 272/13 MINUTES

Members considered the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January, 2013.

### **Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January, 2013, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

## 273/13 SOCIAL CARE COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

The interim Assistant Director (Children's Services) presented a report (annexed) setting out the reasons for requesting the Centre for Excellence in Outcomes for Children (C4EO) to carry out a diagnostic exercise to investigate the way in which Walsall Children's Services responds to complaints.

The report detailed the failings highlighted in the Ofsted inspection report and recognised that most complaints were dealt with and resolved at an early stage however there was no evidence of the Council then learning from these complaints.

A further issue raised by Ofsted was the use of adversarial language when responding to complaints. Officers advised that they were placing the focus on mediating between the complainant and the service area involved.

A member of the panel questioned:-

- Why the current compliment and complaint system wasn't working efficiently and whether it was due to a lack of leadership?
- How long the complaints system had not been functioning properly?
- Whether the old - style approach to resolving complaints was too relaxed given that responses to complaints would take between 10 to 20 days?

In closing, the member stressed that an effective complaints system was important as it acted as a barometer of service delivery.

In response to the questions raised, the interim Executive Director (Children's Services) explained that:-

- The difficulties with the complaints system were endemic rather than systematic;
- It was difficult to accurately provide a timescale as to how long the complaints system had been ineffective for.
- There had been a lack of focus on the 'follow up and follow through' element of complaints and a sustainable system was required to ensure that the council developed learning and understanding from complaints.

The matter was pursued further with a member suggesting that, should the system have been failing for a number of years, a culture may have developed which would be difficult to change. Officers advised that there was an element of such a culture however this was being managed to enable and promote sustainable change. The

Interim Assistant Director (Children's Services) advised that she was personally re-writing and modelling correspondence. Meetings between service users and officers were being undertaken to learn and understand the nature of complaints. The same approach applied to compliments as much could be learned from these as well as complaints.

A query arose in relation to the process associated with receipt of a complaint once received by the Council. The interim Assistant Director (Children's services) stated that complaints would usually be submitted to the council's central complaints team. Complaints are then forwarded to the relevant team to formulate a response in consultation with relevant staff. This would usually be undertaken by a team manager. Occasionally complaints are submitted directly to senior staff who would take ownership of the matter.

The Chair clarified that complaints were dealt with corporately by a central team and asked whether this was the most effective way of processing complaints. The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that it was healthy to have a central team which was not a part of Children's services to coordinate responses.

In closing, the Chair stated that information received by the Panel in relation to complaints has, historically, been quantitative rather than qualitative. The Panel needed more qualitative information to truly understand the situation behind the statistics.

### **Resolved**

That the report be noted.

### **274/13 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS**

The Chair welcomed the Headteacher of St James Primary School, Helen Pearcey, to the meeting. In doing so, the Chair explained that the Head had been invited to the Panel as a result of remarks made in the press following the previous Panel meeting which were not an accurate reflection of events. The Chair, and the Panel were keen to understand the position of St James and get behind the KS2 (Key Stage 2) headline figures.

Miss Pearcey provided a presentation (annexed) setting out:-

- The number of pupils on roll at St James together with details of pupils in receipt of pupil premium and Special Educational Needs (SEN);
- Attainment and progress over time;
- Reasons as to why there had been an attainment dip in 2012;
- Standards across the school;
- The outcomes of the Ofsted inspection undertaken in January, 2012;
- Successes;
- Support received from Serco together with its impact.

It was emphasized that the dip in KS2 in 2012 was partly due to the reduced numbers of children taking their SATS in that particular year. Miss Pearcey stated that it was not a

downward trend and referred members to the various tables within her presentation which supported this view. During 2012 there had been low attainment at the end of key stage 1 with a high percentage of low attainers and a significant number of pupils with SEN.

In relation to support received from Serco, the panel were advised that the support provided was appropriate to the level of support needed. Support included an improvement advisor, assistance with data analysis, attendance at Ofsted feedback and traded service option.

Upon conclusion of the presentation, Miss Pearcey invited all Members of the Panel to visit the school.

The Chair thanked Miss Pearcey for her presentation which was both useful and informative. It provided some background to the figures received and enabled the Panel to better understand the work carried out by schools.

There then followed a period of questioning by members. It was suggested that whilst the majority of parents and carers felt that their children were making good progress it was important that they knew what good progress looked like. Making reference to attainment over time concern was expressed that one child was away on holiday which had negatively affected the English and maths results in 2012. It was asked why this had happened? It was also asked what the Pupil Premium could be spent on?

Miss Pearcey stated that the school operated a zero tolerance approach to holidays during term time. There was an option to fine parents however this was not an approach the school adopted due to the fact that the Headteacher was required to sign the papers which could pose a risk. This option would be considered further when the education contract returned to the ownership of the Council. In respect of support provided to parents the school had a development plan although involvement from parents was low. The school worked with the Children's centre to offer family learning to improve levels of parents. Take up was slow but improving. It was important to work with parents before the child reached school age. In relation to the Pupil Premium it was explained that this money could be used creatively for example, by funding a family support worker or restocking the library.

A member questioned whether increasing school hours would assist in raising attainment?

The panel were advised that children at the school were relatively young and were tired by 3.15 p.m. and so it would not be appropriate. Other initiatives, such as a homework club focussing particularly around ICT and use of the internet were being explored as many children did not have these facilities at home which meant it was popular.

## **Resolved**

**That the presentation be noted.**

## 275/13 KEY STAGE 4 AND 5 KEY STAGE 5 RESULTS IN 2012

The Panel considered a report (annexed) detailing the performance of Walsall school and academies at Key Stages Four and Five (including Walsall College).

A member asked whether the changing national policy shaped the way in which schools and academies tailor service delivery to meet new performance targets?

Officers from Serco advised that there was some element of this occurring. The target was 5+A\* to C including English and Maths and so Headteachers changed their strategies to meet this requirement. Difficulties arose when change took place, such as raising floor targets, as schools are judged against the previous year. This results in schools appearing in a negative light as they would not have been aware, the year before, of the new requirements.

A member asked whether the Pupil Premium could be spent on family support to which officers from Serco advised that this was the case. The schools use of the pupil premium had to be set out on the schools website along with what impact it had made. The Ofsted document on The Pupil Premium would be circulated to the panel.

The Chair commented that the statistics provided in relation to 5A\* - C including English and Maths had fallen by 0.8%. This did not highlight that, within these figures, there had been schools with great rises and others with spectacular falls. The latter being of concern the Chair stated that work needed to be carried out to 'drill down' within such schools to understand the underlying problems and identify solutions. Within those suffering a fall were three academies which was of particular concern given that Academies are fairly autonomous bodies which need not engage with the council and school improvement staff.

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that they had met with the Department for Education (DFE) along with Serco and a discussion was held around Academies. A further meeting was scheduled to be held with the DFE/Serco and further challenge will be made on progress and outcomes at Academies. The outcome of the meeting would be reported to the Panel.

In relation to post 16 outcomes, the Chair expressed concern in relation to post-16 attainment across the borough. Addressing Serco, the Chair advised that Walsall results remained at the lower end of the bottom quartile and that this had been the case for the last 10 years. Further scrutiny of this area was required and the Chair sought agreement from the Panel to discuss possible ways of scrutinising this area with the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services), bringing proposals to the next meeting of the Panel. This was agreed by the Panel.

The Managing Director (Serco) explained that KS5 results were measured differently to KS1, 2 and 4 in that an average points score per pupil was recorded. When this figure was examined for Walsall it indicated an improvement. However, many of the KS5 (largely non-academic) courses on offer in Walsall are delivered by Walsall College. It had previously been agreed that the College and schools would not compete and so the college focussed on vocational courses and were doing so very well. In order to improve the ranking the college now needed to offer vocational courses at a

higher level, change its curriculum and offer a broader range of courses. It was stressed that post 16 qualifications included A Levels but also a range of other comparable Vocational programmes which accrued points which are awarded dependant on the course type ie: Btec,

Members drew comparison with Wolverhampton which was 72<sup>nd</sup> in the table and also included a college. It was explained that should the college not be included within the results Walsall would be 67<sup>th</sup>. The approach taken by Wolverhampton may differ to that of Walsall. Serco were in dialogue with Wolverhampton to better understand their arrangements.

## **Resolved**

- 1) That the outcome of the meeting to be held with the Department for Education be reported to the Panel meeting in March, 2013;**
- 2) That the Chair, in consultation with the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services), brings proposals to the meeting in March, 2013 for in depth scrutiny of post 16;**
- 3) That the Ofsted document on Pupil Premium be circulated to members of the Panel.**

## **276/13 CHILDRENS SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY**

Members considered an update (annexed) on post Ofsted improvement priorities and activity which focussed upon key themes including:-

- Capacity, capability and culture;
- Improving the quality of partnership and governance
- Quality and effectiveness of frontline practice.

Updates were provided on notable improvements made together with key priorities for forthcoming months.

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) highlighted that Members of the Panel had begun a programme of visits to Children's Services to meet with children and young people and the staff who work with them to check out for themselves improvements and the direction of travel.

The Chair enquired as to how many missing and compromised children were within Walsall. In response, it was explained that the government were changing the way in which it counted missing and compromised children. Walsall was involved within this process to gain better understanding.

In relation to the Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding Training programme, the Chair asked when training would commence? The interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that proposals would be considered at the Corporate Parenting Board in February, 2013. Once agreed, training would be offered to all Members and publicised.

A member asked whether a Corporate Parenting Manager had been appointed. It was confirmed that Allison Glover had been given additional responsibilities in respect of this role. This excluded adoption and fostering which remained the responsibility of the Interim Assistant Director (Children's Services).

It was asked what the focus of Children's Society work was.. The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) explained that it would have two elements:-

- To address policy and practice in dealing with child sexual exploitation
- To capture the hopes/vision of young people.

The process would be owned by young safeguarding inspectors. It was suggested that they could be invited to a future Children and Young People's Scrutiny panel.

Members stated that they were looking forward to seeing improvements that were tangible and hoped that the Children's Society would have an impact.

The Chair sought clarity on the trends in relation to Looked After Children. The Interim Assistant Director (Children's Services) advised that during November and December, 2012 the number had decreased as a result of tightening up processes. In January, 2013 the number had increased as a group of five children entered the system. It was explained that various initiatives were underway such as a family support worker being aligned with frontline staff so that they could act quickly and offer support immediately. It was important to make sure there was an exit plan for customers when they enter care so it was not seen as a long term solution.

The Chair suggested that a Safeguarding Working Group be established to consider issues in more depth. Nominations were sought and the following Members indicated that they wished to be a Member of the Group:-

- Councillor B. Cassidy;
- Councillor R. Martin;
- Councillor T. Jukes;
- Councillor R. Thomas
- Councillor E. Hughes

## **Resolved**

1) That a Safeguarding Working Group be established with the following membership:-

- Councillor B. Cassidy;
- Councillor R. Martin;
- Councillor T. Jukes;
- Councillor R. Thomas
- Councillor E. Hughes

2) That the update be noted.

## **277/13 QUARTERLY FINANCIAL MONITORING**

The Panel considered a report (annexed) summarising the predicted revenue and capital outturn position for 2012/13 based on the performance for quarter 3 (to end of December, 2012), for services within the remit of the Children and Young People's Panel.

Discussion took place on the level of agency staff which had contributed to the forecasted net revenue overspend of £0.776m. The Interim Assistant Director (Children's Services) advised that a recruitment drive was amongst a number of initiatives to replace agency staff with permanent employees. It was agreed that the number of agency staff be reported to the next meeting of the Panel.

### **Resolved**

- 1) That the number of agency staff be reported to the Panel meeting in March, 2013;
- 2) That the 2012/13 forecasted year end financial position for services under the remit of the Panel be noted.

## **278/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as 6.00 p.m. 26 March, 2013.

## **279/13 EDUCATION CONTRACT**

(Exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) as amended.

An update was provided on the transition of the education contract.

### **Resolved**

That the update be noted

The meeting terminated at 8.30 pm.

Chair:

Date: