

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 10th NOVEMBER 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and conducted according to the Councils Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Present:

Councillor M. Statham (Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes
Councillor D. Barker
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor M. Follows
Councillor I. Robertson
Councillor S. Wade

Officers

Colleen Male – Director
Andrea Potts – Director
Tanya Collier – Lead Accountant
Isabel Vanderheeren - Transformation Lead

Welcome

At this point in the meeting, the Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and explaining the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

Members confirmed that they could both see and hear the proceedings.

66/20

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor H. Bashir for the duration of the meeting.

67/20

Substitutions

Councillor I. Robertson substituted on behalf of Councillor H. Bashir for the duration of the meeting.

68/20 Declarations of Interest and party whip

There were no declarations of interest for the duration of the meeting

69/20 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to be considered in private session.

70/20 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th September 2020 were considered by the Committee.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2020 be approved.

71/20 Corporate Financial Performance – Quarter 2 (Period 5- August 2020) Financial Monitoring Position 2020/21

The Finance Lead highlighted the salient points within the report (see annexed).

The Committee were advised that the current net revenue forecast position, after the net use of reserves and prior to any mitigating action, would be an overspend of £0.125m. After mitigating actions of (£0.125m) the forecast position was net nil.

A Member asked for clarification on the reasons for ‘increased demand for taxi’s for children’ (table 1). The Director stated that it was partly due to Covid-19 related costs and also due to an increase in children coming into care. Officers were confident that this would reduce in the future and the response to safe transportation to school would mitigate this. The Portfolio Holder stated that the service made a decision to ensure that additional costs were covered to ensure that children could be taken to school safely.

In relation to a Member query in relation to risks detailed within the report the Director stated that this was due to pressures in relation to Covid, this cost was being tracked but was still included in the risk section of the table. In addition due to an increase in number of children coming into care and the inability to progress care plans for some children, due to court pressures.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

72/20

Draft Revenue Budget 2020/21 – 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder spoke to the report (see annexed) and invited questions from the Committee.

The Lead Accountant informed the Committee that the policy proposals included a benefit relating to home to school transport that did not fall under the remit of this committee.

A Member queried how children coming into care costs was forecast. The Director described the financial modelling based on transformation plans, which ensured that children stayed in families wherever possible. Modelling had taken place based on numbers over the previous 4 years, and potential achievements through new models of working. The transformation agenda was around doing what was right for children and families and this should be cost effective to the Council.

Following challenge from Members, the Committee were provided with reassurance that the financial modelling used within the transformation plans for Children's Services would provide financial savings by achieving improved outcomes for young people and their families. For example, through new models of working, young people could be prevented from coming into care and foster care placement disruption could be avoided.

Resolved:

1. The Committee considered the draft revenue budget proposals relating to the remit of the Committee in order to formally report to the Cabinet on the policy proposals.
2. The Committee noted that consultation would be undertaken on all new 2021/22 policy proposals and that feedback would be presented to the Cabinet on 9 December 2020.
3. The Committee noted that further savings proposals would be presented to the Cabinet on 9 December 2020 in order for a balanced budget to be delivered by February 2021, and that these would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee for consultation.

73/20

Right for Children transformation programme

The Transformation Lead highlighted the salient points within the report and spoke to the presentation (annexed).

The Committee were informed that the report provided an update on progress against the Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) Transformation Programme and plans for further development over the next 3 years to achieve the benefits as set out within the Councils Proud Programme.

A Member asked if there was a plan to fund adult specialist workers when the model reached year 4, in order for it to become sustainable. The Director stated that a Family Safeguarding Partnership Board work stream was focused on sustainability. Across the Partnership, the outcomes and impact would be monitored to demonstrate the benefits across the partnership. The impact across other authorities demonstrated that this model improved outcomes.

Officers were asked if the movement for individuals between children's services and adult services would be smoother in the future. The Director explained that as part of the transformation plan focused on children with disabilities, including the transition into adult services.

It was acknowledged that the Council website needed to be improved to ensure individuals were able to access information; work was underway to understand how this could best be improved.

An update on Mocking Bird was provided, and this was a key part of support provided to foster carers and nationally was recognised as good practice.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the service was outcome driven, and agreed that the website needed development, and this would be picked up as part of the proud programme.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

74/20

Youth Justice Working Group Final Report

The report was received by the Committee (annexed). The Portfolio Holder thanked the group for their work, and it was agreed that an update would be provided within 6 months.

Resolved (by roll call)

That the final report of the Youth Justice Working Group be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

75/20

Covid-19 Briefing note

The Chair stated that this was a briefing note provided for assurance, and any comments or queries would be dealt with outside of the meeting.

76/20

Areas of Focus

The draft areas of focus 2020/21 was considered.

Resolved

That the draft areas of focus 2020/21 was agreed.

77/19

Forward Plans

The forward plans were noted.

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.15 p.m.