

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

TUESDAY 24 FEBRUARY, 2015 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. Anson (Substitute)  
Councillor D. Shires  
Councillor S. Wade  
Councillor T. Wilson

### Portfolio Holder

Councillor B. Cassidy

### Non elected voting Members present

S. Raynor (Lichfield Diocesan Education)

### Non elected non voting Members present

R. Bragger (Primary 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)  
Andrea Potts - Assistant Director (Early Help, Children's Commissioning and Workforce Development)  
Carol Boughton - Head of Service (Safeguarding)  
Lloyd Haynes - Senior Finance Manager  
Alan Michell - Head of Youth Support Services and school admissions and pupil place planning  
Jane Bonner – Interim Head of Service for School Improvement  
Frances Done - Independent Chair of the Education Challenge Board  
Sally Roberts - Walsall CCG  
Anet Baker - NHS Walsall  
Neil Picken – Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager

473/15 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor R. Martin, Councillor H. Sarohi, and Mr D. Blackwell.

474/15 **SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor D. Anson substituted for Councillor H. Sarohi.

475/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

476/15 **MINUTES**

Members considered the minutes of the meetings held on 13 January, 2015.

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January, 2015, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

477/15 **PERFORMANCE SCORECARD**

The Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) presented a report describing and commenting on the performance and impact on services to children and their families [annexed]. In doing so, it was explained that the direction of travel was generally positive and that all children in care were so because it was appropriate and necessary.

Member's attention was drawn to one of the largest challenges to the service which is the rate at which work is presented to and accepted by the Initial Response Service (IRS) as a contact to Social Care. A large majority of assessments are found to need no further action from Children's Social Care. Work is underway with partners, through the Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board, to improve understanding of Thresholds. A new Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub is being implemented which will assist in providing a more effective and efficient way of handling incoming work and screen cases more quickly.

The Panel were advised that a meeting was to be held with Ofsted and that having an accurate self evaluation was imperative. It was important to retain and maintain an internal and external perspective on services.

The Chair sought clarity with respect to the level of referrals and stressed the importance of clarity for both the public and partners to make referrals to the right place and at the right level.

The Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) agreed and stated that a graded response was a better phrase to use than threshold. It was important to have the correct reporting routes as it was a long route to early help through the multi agency screening team. Members were informed that training workshops would take place to raise awareness and improve practice.

In terms of future developments, the Panel noted that the “Edge of Care” team, due to be operational from April 2015, would bring together and reshape existing resources using intensive, tried-and-tested techniques, to assertively try to keep families together, especially those in which the challenging behaviour of a young person leads parents to want to divest themselves of their parental responsibilities. In essence, it would try to divert individuals from entering care; especially young teenagers as doing so at this stage does not generally produce positive outcomes.

A Member asked what support was given to parents, particularly for those with a child with challenging behaviour. In response, the Interim Assistant Director (Social Care) advised that the situation would be analysed before using an evidence based approach to support existing strengths and work on weaknesses. This would then be built upon to develop the relationship and confidence of the parent in managing the situation.

In terms of support, it was explained that there were a wide range of parenting programmes both universal and targeted for those with challenging behaviour. A large number of people had accessed the services available. Commissioning of Health visitors would also become the responsibility of the Local Authority in October, 2015 which would provide further opportunity for development. There were 68 health visitors whom would be transferred.

The Panel were advised that the 0-5 Integrated Early Years/School Ready Strategy was being developed and a manager had been appointed to deliver this in the new financial year. The School Forum also had £1m to assist in getting children ‘school ready’. The Executive Director (Children’s Services) advised that a presentation would be made to the next meeting of the Panel.

In terms of education, a Panel Member queried whether attainment was a problem in specific areas? It was explained that more data was being captured to enable a clearer picture to be made. It was clear that there were specific areas which required support and that certain subjects, such as maths at all key stages needed to be addressed – there were strategies in place to address these and other areas to improve educational attainment.

A Member commented that whilst attainment was improving slightly, it was still not enough as attainment in Walsall was still not good enough. In particular, numeracy and literacy for school leavers seemed to be of a low standard which was cause for concern. In response, the Executive Director (Children’s Services) advised that the challenge facing educational attainment across the Borough should not be underestimated. It required a cultural change and with robust challenge from school governors. It was important to recognise that there was a real drive to deliver improvements urgently, and, the school improvement service had to rebuild from

scratch following the cessation of the SERCO contract. Schools and attainment will improve but it would take time to do so.

The Portfolio Holder, at the request of the Chair, advised that data was being collected each term which enabled the Council to identify any issues and respond quickly. She also advised that Walsall were still committed to appointing social workers of the highest calibre.

**Resolved:**

1. That a presentation on the Development of 0 -5 Integrated Early Years/School Ready Strategy be submitted to the next meeting;
2. That the report be noted.

**478/15 QUARTER 3 FINANCIAL MONITORING**

The Panel considered a report summarising the predicted revenue and capital outturn position for 2014/15, based on the performance for quarter 3 (to end of December, 2014), for services within the remit of the Panel [annexed].

Members were advised that the draft 2014/15 year end financial position for the Children's Services Directorate was an overspend of £2.405m against net controllable budget. This was after the use of £1.733m of earmarked reserves. Pressures on the budget included the number of Looked After Children and social work agency staff. Members were advised that a full breakdown of variances were contained in appendix 1 to the report as submitted.

The Chair commented that it was an ever increasing challenge to reduce budgets whilst improving services.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) advised that £1.6m had been put back into the Children's Services budget for use in case of a crisis.

In terms of budget pressures, the Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that there was a further recruitment drive in place to further reduce reliance on the number of agency staff. This was particularly focussed on the recruitment of experienced social workers. Further work was being undertaken to identify whether it would be feasible to assist potential employees with an intensive training and induction process to get them 'work ready'.

A discussion ensued as to the merits and drawbacks of working through an agency rather than becoming an employee. It was explained that there was a need to break the perception that agency staff were paid more and highlight the fact that there were benefits of becoming an employee. The Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that the agency staff workforce at Walsall was relatively stable at about 12%, which was positive. A working group had been established to implement a strategic plan to reduce agency social workers through recruitment and retention.

A member of the Panel questioned whether there was an agreement in place amongst neighbouring authorities to cap the rates of pay. It was explained that there was an agreement but, in order for it to be successful, it needed continued agreement by all involved.

**Resolved:**

That the draft 2014/15 year end financial position for the Children's Services Directorate be noted.

479/15     **REVIEW OF TARGETED YOUTH WORK**

A report was submitted [annexed] detailing the outcomes of the review of Targeted Youth Work and the proposed delivery model of Targeted Youth Work across the Borough. It was explained that the proposed new structure for delivery would focus on mobile and detached provision and the most vulnerable groups.

The Executive Director (Children's Services) confirmed that the 2015-2017 budget included a reduction of £1.07m in the Targeted Youth Work budget – a reduction from £1.96m to £888k.

A review had been undertaken and Cabinet had approved the principles of the model of Targeted Youth Work across the Borough. The budget remaining after the reduction would be split 60% for commissioned services and 40% for direct delivery by the Council. The outcome being significant reductions in Council services, including the loss of 24.8 FTE posts.

The Head of Youth Support Services advised that it was proposed that Myplace would be retained as both a building and a resource. The remainder of Council provision would be detached youth work. The mobile provision, supported by 3 'hoppers' would be retained, and continue to be made available for use by the whole service (the Cyberbus would continue to be available subject to support from the Police and continued funding, as would the Council service's current fleet of 3 mini-buses).

At the invitation of the Chair, the Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) advised that there had been a significant amount of money lost within the youth support service over previous years. A significant amount had been saved and the proposals represented the best possible service for targeted youth work for £880k.

The Head of Youth Support Services explained that there would need to be a flexible approach when delivering the service in future. The community and voluntary sector will be supported in building delivery capacity and expertise and a sustainable model for the future.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

The Independent Chair of the Education Challenge Board presented a report [annexed] providing an update on the work and progress of the Education Challenge Board, established in November 2014.

The Panel were advised that the Board had met on two occasions and would continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis. It was explained that rapid improvement on specified impact and outcomes was a challenge because of the time taken for new initiatives and actions to deliver outcomes, but stated that there was an urgency to get children the support they require.

It was explained that it was crucial to support and develop excellent leadership in both primary and secondary schools. This applied to both staff and governors.

In terms of understanding the performance of schools, the Board had reviewed the latest available performance data. It also recognised that that the Council had undertaken a comprehensive exercise to obtain, and continue to monitor, data from schools at all key stages. The Board would review this 'data dashboard' at a future meeting. The continued availability of such data was key to identifying areas of challenge and support.

The influential role of the Council in the improvement journey was highlighted as was the need for it to fulfil that role to develop and support management and leadership within schools.

In terms of consultation, the Independent Chair of the Education Challenge Board advised that she had met with Headteachers and Governors. It was clear that there was a great deal of goodwill towards the Council and a real willingness to work with it to drive improvement and challenge complacency across Walsall schools. It was reiterated that it was a long term objective as Walsall is well behind the national average.

A key factor in achieving improvement was the development of early help as many children were not 'school ready'. It was encouraging to see that the Council had allocated funds and resource to make changes to develop early help.

The Chair questioned how school governors, both existing and newly appointed, would be prepared and trained to strongly challenge Headteachers that could be powerful and influential. Officers advised that it was the intention to fill vacancies with capable and competent individuals and would ensure that this was the case. A major exercise was being undertaken with each school to review the governing body to ensure that they had the right spread of skills and expertise. Walsall Governor Association would provide a thorough induction and training programme for new and existing Governors.

The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) confirmed that governing bodies were being reviewed to reduce numbers where appropriate, identify any skill gaps and fill vacancies with individuals with knowledge and experience in a variety of fields. Six members of staff from the Council's finance team had become governors

and were placed in school governing bodies where finance knowledge had been identified as a skills shortage.

A member of the Panel asked what 'teeth' the Challenge Board had in relation to school improvement. In reply, the Independent Chair of the Education Challenge Board did not work with schools as this was the role of the local authority. The role of the Board was to oversee and challenge the work carried out by the Local Authority and its schools to implement the School Improvement Strategy.

A member of the Panel expressed the view that the report missed out the fact that staff within schools needed to be recognised and supported. The Independent Chair of the Education Challenge Board agreed commenting that schools could not achieve without knowledgeable and motivated staff. Their importance was recognised and it was highlighted that Walsall had a number of outstanding Headteachers and senior teams supported by teachers of a high standard that strived to inspire and motivate pupils.

In terms of challenges, the Panel were advised that the biggest challenge within Walsall was developing school to school support and it was the Council's role to provide the support and infrastructure to bring schools together and make it work.

The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) advised that 2 schools had recently come out of Special Measures with one moved to a 'good' category.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) advised that many failing schools were Academies and were engaging with the Council to improve attainment.

The Assistant Director (Access and Attainment) explained that the council had a working relationship with the Regional Commissioner who was in support of the improvement process. Meetings had taken place with Academy sponsors and Council representatives sit on some Academy Governing Boards.

A member asked whether there were Academy representatives on the Education Challenge Board to which it was confirmed that there were 2 Academy Headteachers on the Board.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**481/15 PUPIL PREMIUM**

The Panel considered a report [annexed] providing an update on the outcomes of focussed reviews in identified schools into the use and impact of Pupil Premium Funding.

The Panel were advised that pupil premium was a multi faceted approach, however, some schools used it more effectively than others. Members were referred to

appendix 1 to the report which detailed a number of approaches to using Pupil Premium together with the cost benefit analysis of each.

A Member expressed surprise that teaching assistants, whilst costly, were noted as being very low/no impact for high costs. The Interim Head of Service for School Improvement advised that it was intriguing but the full report provided more context. It states that the report showed that too many TAs were poorly trained, led and managed, thus limiting the impact that they could have on outcomes. It was explained that more recent evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation supports the view that quality, well trained and carefully deployed TAs have a highly positive impact.

In terms of Councillors roles as governors within schools, it was suggested that they, and all governors, should ask:-

- How much does the school receive in Pupil Premium?;
- What does the school use the money for?;
- What is the impact on pupil outcomes and closing gaps in attainment; and
- Is the website compliant?

A member questioned what was being done to encourage parents to sign up for free school meals, given that all KS1 pupils now received a free meal, given that this was required in order for the school to receive funding?

Officers advised that this was a hot topic as universal infant free school meals meant that parents may not return the relevant form. To assist, guidance packs had been produced and circulated to Headteachers to persuade parents to register making it clear that should they choose not to, the school would not receive additional funding which could help and support children.

The Chair stated that this linked with earlier discussions on school improvement and the need to provide school governors with the tools and training to challenge schools on the issue of Pupil Premium.

### **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **482/15 CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE**

The Panel considered a report [annexed] providing an overview of current emotional wellbeing and mental health support for children and young people in Walsall. The report detailed current provision, access and timescales and future commissioning intentions of all partners.

The Panel were advised that national waiting times at tier 3, was 15 weeks.

The Head of Service (Safeguarding) advised that the Council commissions a small part of the CAMHS service. This was being re-shaped as there was a need to



ensure that it focussed on the areas of most need, such as looked after children that may not necessarily meet the threshold. There was a need to find a way of supporting that group and so existing resources were being evaluated to find a way of using them differently.

In terms of access and waiting times, several members commented that the report presented a rosy picture of the service, particularly in relation to timescales. The timescales presented within the report were challenged as they did not accord to Members experiences when assisting their constituents. Representatives from the CCG and NHS Walsall suggested that each case was different and invited members to raise any concerns in relation to particular cases with them at the conclusion of the meeting.

It was explained that a Needs Analysis was being undertaken by Public Health to enable the Council to smoothly commission services. This analysis was expected to be available by September, 2015.

**Resolved**

That the report be noted.

**483/15 WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN**

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

The Clerk advised that the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel had established a Area Partnerships Working Group and were seeking a nominee from each Scrutiny Panel to join its membership. He sought a nomination from the Panel and Councillor T. Jukes indicated that she wished to join the working group.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That Councillor T. Jukes be appointed to the Area Partnership Working Group established by the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel; and**
- 2. That the work programme and forward plan be noted.**

**484/15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as 14 April, 2015.

The meeting terminated at 8.35 p.m.

Chair: .....

Date:.....