

## **EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**5 SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 6.00 PM AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE**

<b>Committee Members present</b>	Councillor C. Towe (Chair) Councillor T. Jukes (Vice-Chair) Councillor D. Barker Councillor A. Ditta Councillor M. Follows Councillor D. James Councillor A. Nazir Councillor T. Wilson
<b>Portfolio Holders present</b>	Councillor A. Nawaz - Children's Services & Education
<b>Non-elected voting Members Present</b>	Ms T. Tunnell (Parent Governor)
<b>Non-elected non-voting</b>	Mr R. Bragger (Primary Teacher Representative) Ms. P. Welter (Secondary Teacher Representative)
<b>Officers present</b>	Eleni Ioannides - Interim Executive Director - Children's Services Debbie Carter - Assistant Director - Children's Services Jane Bonner - Head of Education, Standards & Improvement Ross Hutchinson - Finance Business Partner Lynda Poole - Assistant Director – Access & Achievement Andrea Potts - Assistant Director - Early Help, Commissioning & Workforce Development Craig Goodall - Senior Democratic Services Officer Matthew Powis - Democratic Services Officer
<b>In Attendance: Representatives from E–ACT Academy</b>	Stuart Bellworthy - Regional Education Director Linda Gregory - Deputy Regional Education Director Jane Millward - National Director of Education David Moran - Chief Executive Officer James Nicholson - National Director of Finance & Resources Heather Simpson - Deputy Regional Education Director

### **60/17 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Fitzpatrick and Kudhail.

## 61/17 **SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions.

## 62/17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

Councillors E. Hazell and T. Jukes declared an interest, as they were ambassadors at the Willenhall E-ACT Academy. It was explained that these positions had no formal management responsibilities at the Academy.

## 63/17 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 (AS AMENDED)**

There were no agenda items that required the exclusion of the public.

## 64/17 **MINUTES**

It was requested by a Member that the first sentence of the sixth paragraph of Minute 53/17 be amended to read: 'A Member requested that a paragraph in the covering report that referred to Citizen Impact be amended as they felt that the wording needed to be enhanced'.

A Member also requested that an amendment be made in regard to the first sentence of the fourth paragraph of Minute 55/17 to read: 'The Chair sought clarification on the replacement of three new group managers, as detailed in Section 5.2 of the report'.

### **Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2017, as amended, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

## 65/17 **WILLENHALL E-ACT ACADEMY**

The Chair opened the Committee meeting and welcomed the representatives from E-ACT. He expressed his disappointment regarding the 'inadequate' outcome from the recent Ofsted inspection at the Academy.

The Committee invited the E-ACT officials to give a verbal report on recent developments within the organisation and the issues currently affecting Willenhall E-ACT Academy.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of E-ACT, Mr David Moran, expressed his regret at the outcome of the inspection. He stated that it was unacceptable and that he took full responsibility for the outcome. Since the inspection result, close collaborative working with the Council had been undertaken and a new permanent Head teacher, Kirsty Jones, had been appointed. The Academy had struggled in recent years with behavioural issues, weakened school management and staff retention. In response to this the new Head

teacher had installed 20 full-time teachers into previously unfilled vacancies and provisions had been put in place to focus on core leadership and governance with strong links to the E-ACT regional teams.

The regional management of E-ACT had been working to provide appropriate support to Willenhall E-ACT, which included designated safeguard provision, senior leadership sharing the quality of teaching and the reduction in behaviour and permanent exclusions. He stated that further work was still needed towards the improvement of Key Stage 5 results and raising GCSE attainment. However, focus was also to be given to basic educational skills such as English, Maths and the skills/training required for employment. Whilst he stressed significant improvement was needed with the results at Willenhall E-ACT compared to the national average, West Walsall Academy was in a similar position two years ago and had undergone significant improvement. He highlighted that there had been no permanent exclusions at West Walsall Academy in the past 2 years.

Mr Moran explained that £300,000 had been proposed for investment in a package of support for the Academy which included appropriate external support for teaching and allowing three day's continuing personal development (CPD). Teachers would also be able to see other practice within the E-ACT network of schools. He stated that the extension of CPD had been a success and he continued to receive regular feedback.

Mr Moran concluded that whilst every effort was being made to increase standards and improvement at Willenhall E-ACT Academy, regular feedback was being received from partner organisations including the Department for Education (DfE). He stated that that senior management were confident that improvements at Willenhall E-ACT Academy could be made over the next 12 months.

The Chair thanked Mr Moran for engaging with the Council and stressed that a disconnection with the Local Authority was disadvantageous. The Chair raised a question on how E-ACT was engaging and connecting with parents. Mr Moran confirmed that senior management was available for parents and staff at all times and as well as when the Ofsted report was first released. He clarified that following the report's release, senior management had engaged with the Ambassador group.

The Vice-Chair sought reassurance from Mr Moran in regard to the safety of students who attend Willenhall E-ACT Academy. Mr Moran reaffirmed his position that every child was important and the success of E-ACT depended on identifying mistakes and developing a strategy which focused resources.

Members sought clarification about the involvement of elected Members with E-ACT Academies in the future. Mr Moran confirmed that it was a priority to share information with all Members but confirmed that senior management had a backlog of e-mails which caused significant delays in communication with external parties. He reiterated that collaborative working was needed and successful scrutiny involved the Ambassador group, which would help the Academy to learn, grow and develop in future.

A Member asked a question in relation to senior management and policy changes at Willenhall E-ACT Academy and whether changes made an impact on the outcome of the Ofsted report. The Member also welcomed the described changes but highlighted the problems with staff retention. Mr Moran confirmed that work had been carried out to

monitor school performance, engage with staff and make appropriate changes to the governance arrangements at E-ACT, to hold the Academy to account following criticisms made in the Ofsted report. Transparency was critical in delivering key objectives, especially with regard to staff retention, and commitments such as an anonymous staff survey which would address concerns.

A Member commented that she had attended the meetings of the Ambassadors group and was frustrated because issues had not been picked up quickly enough. She highlighted that contacting the Head teacher was very difficult and communication between partners, the school and parents needed improvement. Mr Moran appreciated the comments from the Member and hoped to work with parents and Members to raise awareness of any issues relating to the Academy. He highlighted that he expected to see an improvement with school standards and would like exam results to be out of the lower 10% of schools nationally. He concluded that Crest Academy, London, which was a part of E-ACT, had, for the first time since it opened been scored 'Good' in its most recent Ofsted inspection. This demonstrated that improvements could be made with the right support in place.

Members noted that the communication and partnership with the Council was effective and improving. The Head of Education, Standards & Improvement stated that the Council had worked with E-ACT to monitor the progress, analyse data and develop a way forward. She confirmed that the Raising Achievement Board was part of the progress and partnership working with the Academy.

The Chair expressed concern that the Willenhall E-ACT governing body was not making decisions locally. He asked whether the Ambassador scheme would solve some of the issues. Mr Moran confirmed that with the changes to the governance arrangements, senior management were looking at the best ways in which outcomes could be improved. He explained that whilst volunteers were exceptional, it was not always possible for them to keep their skill set up to date. This was why E-ACT employed professional governors, such as safeguarding experts, to help with the issues facing their schools. He confirmed that there would be time for the organisation to identify the correct role for community engagement.

The Chair asked for clarification on whether the Ambassador group was a local arrangement. Mr Moran stated that 25 ambassador groups had been established in 2016.

A Member asked E-ACT for assurances on whether the children and staff who attended or worked at an E-ACT Academy would be safe. Mr Moran accepted the criticisms facing the Academy but would ensure that all children and staff were able to work in a safe environment. Regional teams had worked with the Academy to address and focus provision on safeguarding, whilst addressing some of the feedback which had been received from the Ofsted report.

The Chair thanked the representatives of Willenhall E-ACT Academy for attending the meeting and answering questions. He noted the reports of the support that was being provided to the school and the optimism of the representatives regarding the impact of these interventions. He explained that it was important for the Committee to be able to assure itself that the school was improving. The Chair invited E-ACT's representatives to attend the meeting on 27 March 2018. Mr Moran accepted the invitation and said that the Committee would be welcome to hold the meeting at Willenhall E-ACT Academy.

**Resolved:**

**That the Committee review the performance of the Willenhall E-ACT Academy at its meeting to be held on 27 March 2018.**

The Committee adjourned at 7.54 pm and reconvened at 7.58 pm.

**66/17 ACADEMIES**

The Committee considered a report [annexed] that gave an overview of the Ofsted outcomes for Academies in Walsall.

The Chair asked which of the Academies had not engaged with the Council. The Head of Education, Standards & Improvement confirmed that engagement depended on the sponsor and the E-ACT organisations had been the most active in engaging with the Council. The Mercers' Company, which sponsored Walsall Academy, had initially been reluctant to engage with the Council but had now developed a good working relationship and the Head of Education, Standards & Improvement was invited to sit on this Academy's governing body as a non-voting member. She further stated that organisations such as the Winsor Trust and the Elliot Foundation had both established good working relationships with the Council and that they communicated on a regular basis.

A Member asked about the expected turnaround period within which an 'inadequate' or 'required improvement' status might become a 'good' or 'outstanding' rating. The Head of Education, Standards & Improvement confirmed that it would take between 3 or 4 years for a school to improve. However, she highlighted that when an academy was first established at a failing school, it would not be inspected as it required time to make adequate changes. Members were informed that this turnaround allowed an academy to update its leadership and staffing whilst receiving a fresh student cohort. For maintained schools progress was monitored more regularly with improvements being expected within 12 months.

A Member enquired about the dialogue that occurred when challenging underperforming schools that were sponsored academies. The Assistant Director – Access & Achievement confirmed that monthly meetings enabled regular interaction between sponsors, the DfE, Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and senior Council officers. Members highlighted the need for the RSC to be transparent and open to scrutiny to fulfil their role of effectively challenging academies.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

**67/17 CORPORATE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE – QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL MONITORING POSITION FOR 2017/18**

The Committee considered a report [annexed] that gave the corporate financial position and was informed of the final revenue and capital outturn position for 2017/18.

A Member enquired about the expenditure related to the proportion of a de-layering saving proposal which had been undeliverable. The Finance Business Partner indicated that this was the outcome of a middle management review. A further question was asked by a Member in regard to an overspend of £440,000 for Ofsted preparations and a £720,000 overspend in additional unplanned complex Looked After Children (LAC) cases and associated social worker posts/legal costs. The Member added that this £440,000 overspend had seemed excessively high. However, the Chair stated that this expenditure was in relation to preparation for the Ofsted inspection. In regards to the additional unplanned complex LAC cases and associated social worker posts/legal support, the Finance Business Partner explained that this overspend related to unplanned complex cases of LAC and that in some cases require additional support. The Chair sought clarification regarding what was deemed to be a complex case. The Assistant Director of Children's Services confirmed that some of the looked after children required specialist therapy and out of Borough assistance, which could escalate costs. A Member asked whether the Council could provide specialist services to minimise the cost whilst also providing the same level of care. The Head of Education, Standards & Improvement confirmed that due to certain cases requiring unplanned intensive specialists, providing such care in-house was unrealistic. A request was made for a briefing note on the types of complex cases for LAC that were being managed currently, the cost of the support provided and the requirements for bringing this service in-house.

A Member asked a question in regards to Appendix 1 of the report, on whether the Council was correctly estimating figures on looked after children. The Finance Business Partner confirmed that growth was comparable the level of investment and was formulated using past trends when reviewing LAC cost increases year-on-year. However, there was a reported overspend as a result of undelivered LAC savings. The Assistant Director of Children's Services confirmed that LAC figures were rising; other local authorities such as Leeds City Council and Essex County Council, had transformed their corporate priorities to deal with looked after children and had achieved savings.

The Chair enquired about the constant overspends within this service area and asked the Finance Business Partner whether the figures were realistic given the current needs of service users and the increasing demands on the service. He added that in regard to the LAC numbers from 2011 to 2017/18, in 2011/12 there had been 19 external residential placements. The Finance Business Partner clarified that the Council budgets used previous trends on how many cases the Council could expect over a period. In certain circumstances, cases which involved complex and high need children would increase costs for the Council in assisting the need of the child. The Assistant Director of Children's Services reported that in some cases, the Council could not provide accommodation in the Borough and required partnership involvement for types of therapy or areas which had adequate facilities for the specific need. She further stated that 8 children had been relocated back into the Borough for placements.

The Chair asked the Assistant Director of Children's Services whether, given an average cost of external residential placements being £3,387, it would be more effective if there was a designated facility within the Borough. The Assistant Director clarified that a two bed unit had recently opened to deal with complex children.

A Member asked the Assistant Director of Children's Services whether there was transformation plan for services dealing with complex issues, especially when considering

the items raised in the Ofsted inspection report. The Assistant Director confirmed that there had been analysis of the Ofsted report which reviewed financial expenditure within Children's Services and complexity of cases in and outside of the Borough to build a transformation timetable. She also highlighted that there was a comprehensive plan which incorporated case studies of children with challenging behaviour and of high risk, high needs children.

Member sought examples of complex cases to enable the Committee to have an overview of the types of children that had entered the system. The Assistant Director confirmed that examples of complex cases would be submitted to the next meeting the Committee.

The Assistant Director of Early Help, Commissioning & Workforce Development explained that the transformational plan had a proactive approach. The plan involved prioritising the right help to children. This approach meant that prevention tools could be utilised to reduce the number of children being looked after. Members asked whether there had been implications for corporate finance when considering the transformation bid and whether there would be an impact in the current financial year or next. The Assistant Director confirmed that in the short term there were no implications, although these would increase in future as demand across Children's Services grew. However, she confirmed that there had already been an impact in the current financial year and successes with children brought back into Borough had been met with an increase in the number of looked after children.

A Member asked the Finance Business Partner whether, in relation to paragraph 1.3, 'Every Penny Counts' the £1.114m was a realistic figure. The Finance Business Partner confirmed that the savings had been met during the last financial year from the centralised budget but were still required as a part of the 2017/18 budget.

Members sought clarification on the overall state of the financial reserves with reference to the proposed savings to be made from within the action plan. The Finance Business Partner confirmed that the general reserve was £12.4m. He clarified that the outturn report would be specifically for Children's Services and the corporate reserves would be a part of a wider mechanism budget under (Section 151) report. The overspend forecasted on looked after children would be funded through the reserves.

A Member asked for clarification from the Assistant Director of Children's Services in relation to the support for up to 45 unaccompanied asylum seeking children. He asked whether there was an assumption regarding the types of children and their dependent needs. The Assistant Director confirmed that the Council had already committed to take 15 children over a number of years and that 3 children had already been taken into the area from the Home Office.

The Finance Business Partner clarified that two Academy schemes, which had been deemed 'historical', were listed on the forecast capital outturn due to the schemes' requirements having been documented for several years.

## **Resolved:**

- 1. That the Committee note the revenue and capital forecast for 2017/18 year end financial position for services under the remit of the Children's Services and Education Overview & Scrutiny Committee;**
- 2. That a briefing note on the types of complex cases for Looked After Children who were being managed currently, the costs of the support being provided and what would be required to bring this service in-house;**
- 3. That the Transformation Programme theme for looked after children be added to the work programme;**
- 4. That the actions being taken to address the areas of overspend be noted.**

## **68/17 OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services, which had rated the service as 'requires improvement to be good'. He confirmed that a special meeting of the Committee would be arranged to consider the specific details and that there would also be a presentation on the outcomes and recommendations of the inspection report.

Members were informed that the Ofsted inspection report had referred to the Committee in three places with a key recommendation being made. The report recognised that the Committee was challenging processes and compliance within Children's Services. However, it highlighted the need for the Committee to understand and challenge the quality of services to ensure higher outcomes for children.

A Member enquired whether, in relation to the Ofsted report on Children's Services in Walsall the criticism of the Committee could be appealed. The Assistant Director – Early Help, Commissioning & Workforce Development clarified that the Council had challenged the report in the draft stage of its publication. She stated that 15 out of 19 revisions had been accepted by Ofsted and there were no criticisms of individual Members. The Committee had demonstrated cross-party working and progressing compliance with early help. Whilst the Ofsted report rated Children's Services as 'requires improvement to be good', there was evidence of good practice. A Member requested that citizen impact in reports be addressed since clearly all services the Council provided had an impact on people. A Member asked the Assistant Director – Early Help, Commissioning & Workforce Development whether there had been a criticism of senior management investment. She confirmed that she had sought dialogue on specific issues raised within the report, such as senior management investment and further clarification on criticisms raised within the report were given to Children's Services before its publication.

Members enquired about receiving advice on correct processes and ensuring citizen impact monitoring was continually assessed. The Chair stated that the Local Government Association (LGA) provided advice on best practice and effective scrutiny, which would enable the Committee to build on progress already made. He reiterated the need to examine the criticisms raised in the Ofsted report and obtain advice on best practice.



The Vice-Chair stated that the Ofsted report had been a considerable improvement when compared with previous reports and Members congratulated Children's Services employees for the work that they had carried out before and during the Ofsted inspection.

The Chair and Members welcomed Eleni Ioannides as Interim Executive Director of Children's Services.

**Resolved:**

**That a special meeting of the Committee be arranged to analyse the outcome and recommendations in the report of the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services.**

**69/17 UNVALIDATED RESULTS**

The Committee received a report on unvalidated results outlining school performance in Walsall compared to neighbouring authorities and the national average. Members were informed that the percentage of pupils achieving a 'Good Level of Development' within Walsall had improved by 1% from 65% in 2016 to 66% in 2017, although this was still below the national average.

The Head of Education, Standards & Improvement informed the Committee that Secondary School figures were still being collated but Primary School figures had been available for a period of time. She explained that the School Improvement Team worked with Head teachers, chairs of governors and other staff to work on a plan of action. Positive feedback had been received from schools regarding serving Head teachers who had taken part in the school improvement and contributed to valuable CPD by sharing good practice. The Assistant Director – Access & Achievement clarified that schools which did require support worked with Regional Schools Commissioner, but stressed that improvements took time. The Chair advised the Committee that Members were aware of some of the issues facing schools in Walsall; however, information on problems in individual schools would be welcomed by the Committee.

Members emphasised that the results for Reading, Writing and Maths in Key Stage 2, which were at 52%, had not improved. The Head of Education, Standards & Improvement confirmed that the Council worked with schools for all pupils to achieve their full potential. She stated that funding through additional support and strategy would help improve the system and results.

A Member highlighted concerns regarding the leadership styles in schools and the differences between local authority schools and academies. He enquired whether the pattern caused low performance in schools in the Borough. The Head of Education, Standards & Improvement reported that even though school performance in Reading, Writing and Maths was 3% below the national average, it had been the narrowest margin yet recorded in Walsall. She stressed that as the quality of teaching and the overall effectiveness of policies and practices improved, achievement would rise. By way of comparison she further stated that in 2014 there had been a 10.4% gap between Walsall and the national average in A\* - C in both English and Maths.

At this point the Chair had to leave the meeting and the Vice-Chair assumed the Chair for the remainder of the proceedings.

The Vice-Chair drew the Committee's attention to the recent announcement of a student who had been in foster care for a number of years and had subsequently achieved high grades in A Level results.

A Member enquired about the impact of policies and teaching methods on school performance. Whilst he explained that there had been a 9% gap with regard to Reading, Writing and Maths compared to the national average in 2017, more work was needed to identify which practices assisted pupil improvement. He stated that a complex review would be needed to establish if there had been any clear actions and how Head teachers were assisting with improvement outcomes in problem schools. The Head of Education, Standards & Improvement stated that there had been the establishment of an Education Challenge Board that enabled schools to share concerns with other schools and provide a positive challenge.

Members reiterated that in regard to the 9% gap between Reading, Writing and Maths in Walsall compared to the national average, praised the hard work which had gone into closing the gap. A Member noted that a high proportion of the Borough's students received free school meals. She queried information relating to the school funding formula, use of the pupil premium and background information which could give an insight into the challenges the Borough faced when compared to the national average. The Head of Education, Standards & Improvement stated that the annual report expanded on figures in the Borough regarding the pupil premium, school funding formula, deprivation figures and school attainment figures. She further explained that high migration levels were a contributing factor to the data and some of those children would have not been in any form of education.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That the unvalidated attainment and progress results for Walsall children be noted;**
- 2) That an analysis of the impact of the School Improvement Team be considered at a future meeting, with a report to include details of its achievements and challenges and how Head teachers were involved;**
- 3) That further information on attainment at individual schools be shared with committee members.**

**70/17 CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORTING QUARTER 1 (APRIL TO JUNE 2017)**

A report was submitted [see annexed] detailing the performance of Children's Services to the end of Quarter 1 (April 2017 to June 2017). This included information regarding the key indicators, the areas of good performance and areas for improvement.

The Vice-Chair made reference to the table in 2.2 on Social Care contracts and referrals. The report indicated that there had been an increase in the rate of domestic violence

cases which was having an impact on services. She had highlighted the important work of the Police and other partners when triaging cases.

The Vice-Chair drew the Committee's attention to concerns of Child Protection in regard to 3.1 and 3.2, which had indicated high number of Child Sexual Exploitation and comparison figures from similar local authorities. The Assistant Director of Children's Services explained that there had been an increase in the first quarter relating to domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse. She further stated that there had been an increase in cross-referrals and that more children had been allocated a social worker on cases involving looked after children or child protection plans.

A Member raised a question in relation to paragraph 7.1 of the report which indicated that the average caseloads within the Safeguarding and Family Support services had been approaching 25 cases per worker exceeding a limit of 15 cases per worker. The Assistant Director of Children's Services explained that 12 newly qualified staff had been employed and training was ongoing. Whilst she agreed that some social workers still had caseloads higher than the desired limits, newly qualified social workers would enable continuity to be maintained and a reduction in case loads. She concluded that during the Ofsted inspection period reflective supervision had fallen to 53% in June, as priority was shifted to the inspection. However, she confirmed that reflective supervision continued to play a vital role for managers.

The Vice-Chair agreed that reflective supervision was paramount to ensure the compliance, guidance and improvement of performance with staff which should be monitored by team managers.

**Resolved:**

**That the Committee note the contents of the report and understands the strengths, areas of improvement and actions being taken to address them.**

**71/17 'RISE' AGENDA – QUARTER 1**

A report was submitted [see annexed] detailing the background of the 'RISE' Agenda which had been launched in 2016. The agenda outlined the promotion of key priorities for Children's Services, which included:

- A reduction of looked after children safely;
- Improved quality of practice;
- Skilled and stabilised workforce;
- Early help, early on.

The Assistant Director - Early Help, Commissioning & Workforce Development drew the Committee's attention to the development of existing and new social workers, whom the Council would seek to retain and who would receive training development opportunities. She highlighted that 8 trainee social workers would be appointed in February 2018, which would assist with the aim of reducing the number of looked after children and a continuity of social worker practice.

A Member queried the pressure and quality of assessments when reducing the number of looked after children safely. The Assistant Director – Early Help, Commissioning & Workforce Development stated that discussions had taken place between staff in relation to performance and the use of tools such as self reporting. With reference to paragraph 2.1, support had been sought from North Yorkshire as ‘Partners in Practice’ which enabled the Council to better understand the needs and trends of looked after children and formulated better strategic planning. She concluded that mobile technology had been progressing well and but would be rolled out in due course.

Members queried whether there had been previous issues with the promotion of junior members of staff to senior positions. The Assistant Director of Children’s Services referred to the challenge of retaining staff members and the commitment being given to new leaders. She maintained that the management structure had improved and work had been carried out to reduce the numbers of agency workers. A transitional team manager vacancy had recently been filled and the post holder was working with partners and staff to generate new ideas for the service.

The Cabinet Member – Children’s Services & Education reassured the Committee that the Council had the right processes and practices in place to deal with children properly.

A Member queried the reduction of the number of active children/families using the Outcomes star service which was now 24.9%. The Assistant Director of Children’s Services stated that while cases of early help had around 1,000 cases, the step up to social care had been around 700 cases. This had illustrated a flow in the management of cases which ensured children received the right service and care such as health visits or educational support.

A Member referred to ‘Children’s Services: How are we doing?’ booklet. This stated that there were factors which influenced a child’s life without direct involvement such as social and private rental housing issues, parental and child debt and poverty. The Assistant Director of Children’s Services explained that locality working and working with partner organisations ensured continuity of practice with children. She highlighted challenges that partnership working faced but partner cooperation continued to be important to meeting the needs of families facing crisis and to ensure that collaborative working was effective, right information was correctly available for partners and to ensure the best outcomes for children and families.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That the Committee note the content of the report and progress to address area improvement and actions to address them;**
- 2) That a briefing note on the commissioning and implementation of mobile technology to support social workers be provided to the Committee.**

**72/17 WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLANS**

Members considered the Forward Plans of the Council and of the Black Country Executive Joint Committee.

**Resolved:**

**That the Forward Plans be noted.**

**73/17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was 10 October 2017.

The meeting terminated at 9.03 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....