

CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER, 2013 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Panel Members Present	Councillor B. Cassidy (Chair) Councillor R. Martin Councillor G. Perry Councillor D. Shires Councillor E. Russell (substitute) Councillor T. Jukes Councillor E. Hughes
Non elected voting members present	S. Raynor (Lichfield Diocesan Education)
Non elected non voting Members present	R. Bragger (Primary Teacher Representative) David Blackwell (Secondary Teacher Representative)
Portfolio holder present	Councillor R. Andrew
Officers Present	Rose Collinson - Interim Executive Director, Children's Services; Sue Butcher - Interim Assistant Director, Specialist Services Dan Mortiboys – Senior Finance Manager Neil Picken – Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager Darrell Harman - Head of Service: Effectiveness, Improvement & Contract Management Caroline Guest – Access Manager Karen Dainty – Head Teacher – Virtual School Jane Bonner – Senior Area Achievement Advisor Isobel Vanderheeren – IYPSS Integrated Strategic Lead - Positive Activities Alan Michell – Head of Service (Integrated Young People's Support Service)

326/13 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor P. Lane.

327/13 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor E. Russell substituted for Councillor P. Lane.

328/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

329/13 **MINUTES**

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on 20 August, 2013

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 August, 2013, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

330/13 **CHANGE IN THE ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chair sought agreement from the Panel to consider item 10 – ‘Children’s Commissioning’ prior to the remaining items on the agenda.

Resolved

That item 10 be considered prior to the remaining items on the agenda.

331/13 **CHILDREN’S COMMISSIONING - SHORT BREAK SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY AND EARLY HELP SERVICES**

The Head of Service: Effectiveness, Improvement and Contract Management provided a presentation providing an overview of commissioning together with specific updates in relation to Short Break Services and Early Help Services.

The presentation highlighted:-

- What Commissioning is;
- Models of Commissioning;
- The strategic Commissioning Cycle;
- Operational Commissioning and Brokerage;
- Walsall’s procurement programme;
- The Department for Communities and Local Government journey to intelligent commissioning;
- Early Help and Children’s Centres including consultation;
- Short Breaks

Discussion followed on Children’s Centres. Members were advised that the procurement process related to only three of the 18 Children’s Centres. Details were provided on the various methods of consultation which had taken place including information leaflets, online surveys, consultation meetings and ‘comment trees’ in each centre to capture parent/user comments on post it notes.

In relation to the head teachers, school governors, Centre Managers and other staff survey, it was noted that there was strong agreement that services should be prioritised for children and families who are in greatest need. Members sought clarity on ‘greatest need’ to which officers advised that there was a range of criteria such as whether the child:-

- Is in an area of deprivation;
- Is part of a large family;
- Lives in a household with no wage earners.

When such criteria are collated categories can be identified, including that of greatest need.

The Chair advised Members of the Panel that Children's Centre Commissioning would be considered again, in more detail, at the Panel's meeting to be held on 15 October, 2013.

Officers advised that further work was being undertaken in relation to Short Break Services and the Personalisation Policy. This matter would be reported to the Panel in due course.

Resolved

- 1. That a report on Children's centres be added to the work programme for consideration by the Panel at its meeting to be held on 15th October, 2013;**
- 2. That the presentation be noted;**
- 3. That the presentation be circulated to Members of the Children's and Young People Scrutiny Panel**

332/13 CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) presented a report [annexed] providing an overview of performance and progress towards delivering the priorities set out in the Strategic Improvement Plan for Safeguarding in Walsall.

Members were advised that the presentation on progress had been delivered to the DfE in August, 2013. There was now a drive to be even better and get the improvement notice lifted before the end of the year.

In response to a question in relation to anticipated dates of future visits from Ofsted or the DfE, it was explained that both would be expected before the end of the year. The DfE would undertake a review to ascertain whether or not the improvement notice could be lifted.

The Chair stated that there was slight concern following the lifting of the improvement notice that Authorities could slip back, however, there was no intention of that happening within Walsall.

The Interim Assistant Director (Children's Services) advised that Children's Services were open to Scrutiny and worked to be Ofsted ready. Further, Children's Services know themselves, know their families and know how they are doing.

Members considered the performance scorecard and noted the offer of training by Officers to enable Members to better understand and interpret the performance information presented. The Chair agreed that this would be useful and that a session should be arranged prior to the next meeting of the Panel. Members needed to

understand the various acronyms and navigate quickly and confidently through performance information.

In relation to Social Worker caseloads it was identified that as of June, 2013 the average number of cases per worker including Children in need, Child Protection Plans and Looked After Children was 25.2. The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that cases varied in complexity so needed to be weighted properly to ensure an even and equitable distribution between staff. The Improvement Board would be addressing the issue of caseloads at the next meeting. The distribution of cases needed to be fair and equitable.

The Chair questioned what impact the new performance approach was having on staff. The Interim Assistant Director (Children's Services) advised that where there were issues of poor performance, an appropriate combination of supportive and challenging management action was taken to improve performance.

The Chair queried how statistics and performance data were being collated without the Paris System. Officers advised that there were alternative ways of collating the data. Information was being scrutinised and staff were becoming accustomed to gathering information in a way which enabled the collation of data and statistics. The Chair asked for clarification as to whether or not the Paris System alone prevented performance data being produced previously. Officers advised that Paris would not have stopped performance data being gathered as there were a number of ways in which data could be collated.

Resolved

That a training session be arranged in respect of performance monitoring prior to the next meeting of the Panel.

333/13 QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL MONITORING POSITION FOR 2013/14

The Senior Finance Manager updated the Panel on the predicted revenue and capital outturn position for 2013/14 based on performance for quarter one (to end of June 2013), for services with the remit of the Panel.

The Panel noted with concern the predicted overspend of £1.486m, after the use of approved reserves, carry forwards and action planning. It was asked at what point significant action would need to be taken given that in future services would become more expensive with increased demand.

In response, the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) clarified that no one was comfortable with an overspend. Service areas should manage within resources and there was a need to improve sustainably. A number of areas needed to be addressed to have a real impact on the budget including reducing reliance on agency staff. The number of children in care was the biggest cost, however, there should not be a quota as safeguarding children was paramount both in terms of a moral and statutory duty.

Members queried whether the benefits cap had impacted upon the number of referrals? Officers advised that the benefits cap was beginning to impact upon the number of

referrals and this would have a proportionate impact on the numbers of children entering the care system.

Discussion returned to that of the predicted overspend with Members reiterating concerns that such an overspend would impact on other areas. The Senior Finance Manager advised that all managers were required to deliver services within budget. Remedial action would be taken which could include reducing/stopping services or reducing non-essential staff.

The Interim Assistant Director (Specialist Services) advised that a number of areas were being considered including ways in which to reduce the cost of care. Providing in house residential services was more expensive than external placements, however, the level of provision such as waking nights were included within the cost whereas externally, it could be an additional, optional cost.

In addition, the early help framework should be ready in October, 2013. It was hoped that early intervention would slow down or prevent the need for a child to be taken into care. There was a lot of early help within Walsall, however, more could be done to help people navigate around services.

Discussion returned to the costs of care. The Interim Assistant Director (Specialist Services) advised that the average cost per week with external providers was £2,600 although in more difficult cases this could rise to £5,000 per week. Internally, it cost £3,300 per week. The important issue were that children with the most complex needs received the right care at the right time.

In terms of foster care arrangements costs for placements sourced internally were £350 per week with external providers ranging from £500 - £1200. The average cost being £800.

Resolved

That the 2013/14 forecasted year - end financial position for services under the remit of the Panel be noted.

334/13 DETAIL OF 2012/13 INTEGRATED YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUPPORT SERVICE OUTTURN

Members considered a report [annexed] detailing reasons for the underspend of £450,000 in Integrated Young People's Support Services (IYPSS) during 2012/13.

Officers advised that two main factors contributed to the underspend including vacancies (£190,000) and commissioned services (£265,000).

In relation to vacancies it was explained that activity within IYPSS was redesigned including the administration team and implementation of the part time youth worker posts. In addition a number of posts were held vacant where possible.

In relation to commissioned services a number of contracts had been renegotiated which resulted in savings. A number of programmes had achieved an underspend of

£100,000 as part of planned reductions in the delivery of a range of positive activities and related spend.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

335/13 LEARNING AND ATTAINMENT INCLUDING LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Chair drew members attention to the report and briefing note which were circulated after the agenda had been despatched.

The Panel then considered a report detailing the provisional results summary [annexed] and a briefing note on home education [annexed].

The Chair advised that the Panel would have opportunity to consider individual school results in private session.

Discussion took place on home schooling. It was noted that 141 children were being home schooled, however, the number fluctuated. There were a number of cases where home schooling was successful. The key to home schooling was establishing a supportive relationship with parents. Within Walsall there was positive engagement with families. This enabled staff to consider the needs of children and recognise any concerns at an early stage and taking steps to address any issues as they arise.

The Chair asked how often visits were undertaken? Officers advised that they did not have right of entry however staff worked hard to build positive relationships to enable visits to take place. A number of families were supported by external organisations which could present challenges.

Members asked about the average period of home schooling to which officers advised that it varied. Some chose to home school during the primary phase whilst others home schooled completely. There was a community of those which home schooled with parents offering specific services which could benefit others. There were also a number of self supporting groups.

It was asked how Walsall compared nationally to which officers agreed to investigate.

In response to a question on examinations officers advised that some home schooled pupils did sit exams. Given that the pupils are home schooled it was challenging to find exam centres.

The Chair accepted that home schooling was important and in many cases prevented a child from having to attend school where they were being bullied. It was important, however, to keep on top of assessing and inspecting to ensure that safeguarding was in place. It was suggested that this matter required further consideration and that a 'one meeting' working group be established. Nominees were sought and Councillors R. Martin, T. Jukes, D. Shires and E. Hughes indicated that they wished to be appointed to the working group.

Resolved

- 1. That a one meeting working group be established to consider Home Schooling in more depth;**
- 2. That Councillors R. Martin, T. Jukes, D. Shires, E. Hughes be appointed to the 'Home Schooling Working Group'.**

336/13 WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the work programme.

Resolved

That the work programme be noted.

337/13 FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the forward plan [annexed].

Resolved

That the forward plan be noted.

338/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as 15 October, 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

339/13 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

Resolved

That during consideration of the remaining item on the agenda, the Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel considers that the item for consideration is exempt information by virtue of the appropriate paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972, and accordingly resolves to consider the item in private.

340/13 PROVISIONAL RESULTS SUMMARY

Members considered the 2013 provisional results summary circulated at the meeting.

Resolved

- 1. That a further report be considered in 2014 once results had been validated;**

2. That quarterly reports on Ofsted Judgements be included within the work programme.

The meeting terminated at 8.20 p.m.

Chair:

Date:.....