

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

WEDNESDAY 17 JULY, 2013 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

<b>Panel Members Present</b>	Councillor B. Cassidy (Chair) Councillor R. Martin (Vice Chair) Councillor G. Perry Councillor T. Jukes Councillor E. Hughes
<b>Non elected non-voting members present</b>	R. Bragger (Primary 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; Sue Butcher - Interim Assistant Director, Specialist Services Dan Mortiboys - Senior Finance Manager (Head of Schools Finance) Isabel Vanderheeran – Strategic Lead - Positive Activities Sue Morgan - Strategic Lead - Early Intervention & Family Support Neil Picken – Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager

### **303/13 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor D. Shires, Councillor P. Lane and Mr .S. Raynor.

### **304/13 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions.

### **305/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

### **306/13 MINUTES**

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on 4 June, 2013

## **Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 June, 2013, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

### **307/13 DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2012/13 (PRE AUDIT)**

The Senior Finance Manager (Head of Schools Finance) presented the draft revenue and capital outturn position for the year ended 2012/13 for services within the remit of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny and Performance Panel [annexed]. Members were informed that the outturn was subject to external Audit with a report being published in September, 2013.

Members considered the report and noted the additional detail as contained within appendix 1 which set out reasons and explanations for variations within the budget.

Clarity was also sought on Children's Resource Management as it was not clear what services this encapsulated. In response, the interim Assistant Director (Specialist Services) advised that Children's Resource Management included a variety of different areas and posts such as the Head of Corporate Parenting and the Looked After Children's Team. The Senior Finance Manager explained that Children Resource Management, Looked After Children, Transition and Leaving Care and Internal Residential were within Corporate Parenting.

The Chair expressed concern that a number of areas showed an underspend and sought an explanation. Officers explained that the council operated a cash limited budget. Should pressures arise within a particular area of the budget efforts would be made to reduce spend in others to balance the budget. For reporting purposes the area from which savings were made would then show as an underspend. This was not to the detriment of the services as the budget was demand led to the needs of the cohort.

The Chair stated that it was still surprising, given the rise in looked after children, that the budget showed an overspend of £697,333. Given this, Members requested a breakdown of the cost of taking a child into care to enable the Panel to have a better understanding of the accounts.

The Interim Assistant Director (Specialist Services) stated that savings had been achieved due to improvements with service process which were quicker and less cumbersome. There was a drive to improve the time in which children were adopted and to increase the overall number of adoptions. This linked to the national drive to provide 'forever families'.

The Chair questioned the underspend within youth services of £449,957. Officers advised that some posts had been kept vacant for longer than anticipated, contracts had been renewed on better terms and there had been a reduction in commissioned services. The Panel requested that further information on Youth Services be submitted for consideration at the Panel's meeting in August, 2013

In relation to Looked After Children it was asked why there was an overspend of £147,057. The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that there had been a higher number of children taken into care than expected when setting the budget. Efforts were being made to restrict the number of children placed outside the borough and reduce the use of foster agencies to use in house facilities where possible and in the child's best interest.

Discussion ensued on the underspend relating to internal residential. Officers advised that, amongst other reasons, a placement was held vacant at Redruth for six months however the placement didn't materialise which resulted in direct costs being reduced. There was also a redesign of services and so the budget allocated would have been set to reflect possible outcomes which could have been more costly.

## **Resolved**

1. That the draft 2012/13 year end financial position for services under the remit of the Children's & Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel be noted.
2. That the Senior Finance Manager (Head of Schools Finance) provide a briefing note providing a breakdown of the costs of taking a child into care;
3. That a report be submitted to the Panel meeting on 20 August, 2013 setting out in more detail the reasons for the underspend within youth services;

## **308/13 WALSALL TOP TIPS FOR EARLY HELP FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

The Integrated Strategic Lead for Positive Activities advised that children and families views were fundamental to the strategy for the 'early help offer' and would be involved throughout the process of developing the offer and strategy.

The Panel then viewed a DVD which involved a number of children and families who had received/were receiving assistance, together with their 'top tips' regarding outcomes and plans for early help.

Top tips included:

- Listen to children and young people and families
- Build Trust and earn respect
- Stick it through
- Consider whose outcome is it anyway?!
- Work in our time
- Be flexible
- One size doesn't fit all!
- Make it fun!

Following the DVD it was explained that it had been circulated to practitioners whom had found it useful to be reminded of what mattered to children and families.

The Panel were advised that help had been provided through the Success Centre, Targeted Support, Area Family Support and Children's Centres. Reference was made to the 'Triple P Positive Parenting Programme'. Over 200 practitioners had been trained in Walsall delivering support to circa 500 people during the first six months of

2013. A social marketing campaign was due to commence in 2013 to encourage parents to use services available.

Officers advised that the 6 month evaluation report in respect of parenting programmes would be available within the next few months.

## **Resolved**

### **That the presentation be noted**

#### **309/13 CHILDREN'S CENTRES - CONSULTATION**

The Strategic Lead for Early Intervention and Family Support provided background to the consultation on Children's Centres.

Members were advised that it was critical to consult with a range of people including children and families, schools and school governors. A number of consultation events had taken place and effort had been made to make consultation accessible to all, providing interpreters where necessary.

Results from feedback suggested that all sites should be maintained and not diminished in number. Officers advised that there were no proposals to close any of the 18 sites, however, management arrangements could be adjusted. This could include a manager having oversight of two centres rather than one and a fresh look at commissioning.

In response to a question regarding the need for change, Officers advised that new statutory guidance had been issued along with the Ofsted framework. Walsall needed to change, focus and better target resource to ensure that it was in-line with this guidance.

Members considered the briefing note and requested that the report detailing the outcome of consultation and recommendations for action be considered by the Panel at its meeting scheduled to be held on 10 September, 2013.

Members stressed that each centre needed to reflect its community and tailor services to the needs of the area it served.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services advised that all Children's Centres had previously been run by Serco which had led to competition between centres with some, in very close proximity, competing and offering the same services. A more holistic approach was required to become area focussed to meet the needs of communities. Members of the Panel were very keen to ensure that each centre continued to meet and reflect the individual needs of its local community.

## **Resolved**

That a further report detailing the outcome of consultation of Children's Centres be considered by the Panel at its meeting to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2013.

## 310/13 CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) provided an update on improvement activity.

In relation to capacity, capability and culture, Members were informed that a staff and partnership engagement session had been held in May which focussed on children's voices/views and change management. The session looked particularly at strategies to listen and learn from children and young people and the implications of practice change, personal change and professional change. Members were advised that participants were positive and constructive about the session. Further sessions would take place in August, 2013.

Officers advised that with regard to reshaping the Strategic Improvement Plan, phase 2 was in place and directly reflected the priorities set out in the Improvement Notice whilst offering a sharper and more focussed set of objectives and actions. The Phase 2 Plan enabled management to make more effective and informed decisions on where to target resources to support improvement activity to best effect.

A discussion ensued on People Capacity. Members sought clarity on the recruitment drive and effectiveness of the 'breakfast meeting', a recruitment exercise hosted jointly by Children's Services and Adult Social Care to promote opportunities to work in Walsall. It was also asked what impact, if any, the decision by Birmingham Council to reduce its social workers by 80 could have within Walsall.

In response, the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that Birmingham had reshaped its services which had led to a reduction in staffing. Any suitable qualified individual was able to apply for positions at Walsall Council but it was stressed that only the very best candidates would be successful and that Walsall now had very stringent interview arrangements in place. This approach was being adopted to ensure that only the best candidates were successful. Similar robust process had meant that, despite interviews taking place, no appointments had been made to the post of Principal Social Worker, Team Manager within the Children with Disabilities Team or Manager of the Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board. It was stressed that whilst it was difficult to take a decision not to make appointments it was better than making a wrong appointment. In relation to the Principal Social Worker post, Members were advised that interim arrangements were in place.

Members questioned the reasons as to why suitable candidates were not applying for the position of Principal Social Worker at Walsall. Officers advised that it was a sought after position for many however it manifested itself differently in each authority. Within Walsall the successful candidate would need to be an exemplar who would help others grow but also have the ability to challenge both the Interim Assistant Director – (specialist services) and Interim Executive Director (Children's Services). The position would be re-advertised and senior management were confident that they would successfully make an appointment.

In relation to the 'breakfast meeting', it was explained that regular contact was made with potential employees who had attended advising them of posts as they become available. The Council had recently advertised 15 posts which had resulted in 104 applications being submitted. It was hoped that all 15 positions would be filled. A further recruitment drive would take place in September, 2013.

In relation to the slides which were due to be delivered to the DfE it was explained that the DfE had postponed the visit due to the inspection being undertaken and so hadn't received the presentation. The Chair noted from the slides improvements made at 'the front door' with contact to referral time reduced from 32 to 6 days. Officers advised that the Initial Response Service was having a positive impact and now included specialists from health and education for part of the week.

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) explained that various improvements were being considered at the front door, such as providing a secure email service for schools to prevent the need for faxing which was outdated. Monitoring of referrals was also taking place to enable staff to identify any emerging trends or patterns. Members asked for further information in relation to re-referrals.

A Member asked when the council would receive feedback from the Ofsted following the recent inspection. Officers advised that there could be a report in August and agreed to update the Panel as and when information became available.

### **Resolved**

1. That a briefing note on re-referrals be circulated to the Panel;
2. That the outcome of the inspection be circulated to Members when available;
3. That the update be noted.

### **311/13 SAFEGUARDING WORKING GROUP**

The Interim Executive (Children's Services) provided an update in relation to the recommendations of the Safeguarding Working Group. The Panel were advised that a meeting had been called on 20 August, 2013 to look in more detail at the recommendations and work undertaken.

Officers highlighted that a performance scorecard would be available for consideration by the Panel at its meeting in August, 2013.

### **Resolved**

That the update be noted.

### **312/13 WORK PROGRAMME AND WORKING GROUPS**

Members of the Panel considered a draft work programme [annexed] and made the following suggestions:-

- That Commissioning Provision for Early Help Services (including Child Care) be incorporated into Safeguarding Children and Young People and Families;
- That Looked After Children Attainment be incorporated into Learning and Attainment;
- That the Performance Scorecard be added as an item for every meeting;

- That the Commissioning Short Break Services for Children with a disability be considered by the Panel on 10 September, 2013
- That a further update on the Safeguarding Working Group be received on 14 January, 2014;
- That Home Schooling be added to the work programme and that the Portfolio Holder (Resources) is notified when it is submitted to the Panel for consideration.

Members also considered the establishment of working groups. The Chair suggested that two working groups be established – ‘Health Matters’ and ‘Looked After Children’. The Panel agreed and nominations for membership were received as follows:-

Health Matters – Councillors D. Shires, P. Lane and B. Cassidy

Looked After Children – Councillors R. Martin, T. Jukes, E. Hughes and G. Perry

The Chair advised that the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel had established a cross scrutiny panel working group to look at the impact of welfare reform. Nominations were sought for a member of the Children’s and Young People Scrutiny Panel to join the working group.

Councillors B. Cassidy and E. Hughes stated that they would like to be appointed to the welfare reform working group.

**Resolved:-**

1. That Commissioning Provision for Early Help Services (including Child Care) be incorporated into Safeguarding Children and Young People and Families;
2. That Looked After Children Attainment be incorporated into Learning and Attainment;
3. That the Performance Scorecard be added as an item for every meeting;
4. That the Commissioning Short Break Services for Children with a Disability be considered by the Panel on 10 September, 2013
5. That a further update on the Safeguarding Working Group be received on 14 January, 2014;
6. That Home Schooling be added to the work programme and that the Portfolio Holder (Resources) be notified when it is submitted to the Panel for consideration.
7. That a Health Matters Working Group be established with the following membership:-
  - Councillors D. Shires, P. Lane and B. Cassidy
8. That a Looked After Children Working Group be established with the following membership:-
  - Councillors R. Martin, T. Jukes, E. Hughes and G. Perry
9. That Councillors B. Cassidy and E. Hughes be appointed to the Welfare Reform Working Group and that the clerk notifies the Chair of Corporate of these appointments.

**313/13 FORWARD PLAN**

Members considered the forward plan [annexed].

**Resolved**

That the forward plan be noted.

**314/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as 20 August, 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

**315/13 OFSTED INSPECTION**

[Exempt information under paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)]

Members received an update following the recent Ofsted inspection and were advised that the report would be circulated as soon as it became available.

**Resolved**

1. That the update be noted
2. That the Ofsted report be circulated as soon as it becomes available.

The meeting terminated at 8.10 p.m.

Chair: .....

Date: .....