

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 1 July 2016 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor C Potts (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, D Bell, K Corrigan, O Gunn, D Hall, C Hampson, J Hart, D Hicks, K Hopper, M Nicholls, L Pounder, M Simmons, H Smith, M Stanton and P Stradling

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Kinch

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Dearden and P Lawton.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Media Relations - Update on Press Coverage

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to recent press articles relating to the remit of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The articles were:

- County Durham's young champions recognised – following the introduction of the Young Person's Chairman's Medal which was introduced by Councillor Blakey, the former Chairman of the County Council, 14 of County Durham's most deserving young people received the award at a presentation event on 13 May 2016.

- 10,000 turn out for Wharton Park's re-opening weekend – Families enjoyed two days of entertainment on the opening bank holiday weekend following the £3m renovation.
- Wolsingham School first in the region to achieve UNESCO associated status – the school had become one of 22 UNESCO associated schools within the UK, joining a global network of 10000 educational institutions in 181 countries.

The Chairman commended the achievement of Wolsingham School and Members agreed that a letter be sent to them on behalf of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to congratulate them for achieving UNESCO associated status. Members agreed that letters of congratulations should be sent to all of the winners of the Young Persons Chairman's Medal, on behalf of the Committee.

The Chairman agreed to amend the order of business and consider item no. 10 on the agenda.

6 Concessionary Travel Arrangements for Disabled Residents and their Carers

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Development which informed them of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) which provided free travel on local bus services for older and disabled people (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Transport and Contract Services confirmed that travel was free in County Durham for children under five years old and legal advice had been sought with regards to legislation regarding disabled children under the age of five years. He explained that eligibility guidance provided clarity that the concession for carers applied because they were travelling with a person of fee paying age. It had been established that the Council were not obliged to give a free pass to carers of disabled children under the age of five years, however it could be issued at the Councils discretion.

Councillor Armstrong referred to austerity and measures taken to reduce costs, and queried the cost to the authority, if a discretionary concession was offered to carers of disabled children under 5 years old. The Head of Transport confirmed that there would be an estimated 280 children that would be entitled to such a scheme and it would cost in excess of £35000 per year. Following a benchmarking exercise in areas of Tyne and Wear, he confirmed that North Tyneside Council did not offer free travel to companions of disabled children, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Local Authorities did, however most of the Tees Valley Councils did not, with the only exception being Darlington Borough Council. He also added that the Service was considering all non-statutory functions with regards to cost-cutting.

Councillor Hall confirmed that information should be provided to the Committee to ensure that travel costs were not provided for by other means, such as carers allowance and that an investigation to establish whether travel companions were covered within the Carers' Allowance should take place.

Councillor Gunn stressed the importance of safeguards for people who did not have other forms of transport to be disadvantaged in any way.

Councillor Stradling confirmed that there was not enough information for Members to consider making a recommendation to Cabinet and Councillor Armstrong requested an Equality Impact Assessment be included in the additional information being brought back to the committee. The Head of Transport and Contract Services confirmed that he would return at a later date with approximate numbers and cost implications for the Committee to consider.

Resolved:

- i. That the report be noted.
- ii. That a further report be brought to Committee.

The Chairman confirmed that the items would be considered from item no. 7 on the agenda.

7 Innovations Programme Update

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services which provided an update on the progress and implementation of the Innovations in Children's Social Care Programme (for copy see file of minutes).

Members received a presentation from the Strategic Manager, Children's Services which highlighted the background to the programme, the progress to date, the impact of the transformation to date, and the challenges that remained and next steps (for copy of slides see file of minutes).

Councillor Gunn commended the progress which had been made during a time, when as a result of austerity, there was such a huge reduction in public expenditure and it was very difficult to be allocated funding.

Councillor Nicholls was concerned by the stress on Social Workers with excessive caseloads and welcomed the progress towards more manageable numbers of Looked after Children. The Strategic Manager, Children's Services confirmed that a lot of the success was down to joint working and the co-locating of services with One Point. Social Workers were now located within the same building as Family Workers and therefore communication in the transfer of care had been improved. Team Co-ordinators were now responsible for administrative tasks, such as arranging meetings therefore Social Workers could use their time more efficiently. In addition, it was proposed that a PCSO would be based at One Point and could provide essential information on families which were not yet subject to a care plan, but may need early intervention.

Councillor Hart referred to the sustainability of the programme considering £3.2m funding from the Innovations Programme had been utilised and he queried whether a further proposal had been made to secure funding in order to continue the programme. The Strategic Manger, Children's Services confirmed that the Government had committed a further £200m to the Innovations Fund for the next two years and bids were welcome for new projects or from those who wanted to upscale current models. A proposal was being submitted and should it not be successful, as long as the estimated targets for the reduction of LAC be met, the money saved would be reinvested, and the service could be maintained. If not, staggered reductions to the resources going in would be made.

Councillor Stradling suggested that a further progress report was given in six months and the Strategic Manager, Children's Services confirmed that an update would be given following receipt of the Independent Evaluation Report which was scheduled.

Resolved:

That recommendation as outlined in the report be approved.

8 Director of Public Health Annual Report

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Public Health which requested the receipt of the 2015 annual report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham (for copy see file of minutes).

Members received a presentation from the Consultant in Public Health which provided an update on Obesity in County Durham (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Nicholls referred to the ongoing rise in obesity and confirmed that although a change in diet had contributed, there had been a reduction in physical activity over the years. Children were not playing outdoors and had limited physical education in schools. He confirmed that it was crucial for schools offer additional activities to assist children in becoming more active and as a result, living a more active lifestyle in later years. The Consultant in Public Health confirmed that there was a lot of work going on in schools such as projects for growing your own food, food plans, children were encouraged to walk or cycle to school and there was a nation campaign called The Daily Mile which encouraged children to walk every day.

Councillor Smith referred to the remit of various Committees - planning and licensing Committees considered whether food establishments would generate business and create jobs in local areas, however this Committee which was considering the impact that those establishments had when selling high calorie foods which contributed to weight gain. The Consultant in Public Health referred to a recent headline with reference to a planning application for a fast food premises in Newcastle which had been refused due to it being near a school. A subsequent appeal was withdrawn by the applicant due which confirmed that it was possible to fend off organisations if they could be of detriment to children's health.

With reference to food labelling and the significant advertising for food which was low in fat or fat free, Councillor Gunn confirmed that upon close inspection of their nutritional content, a lot of food which did not contain fat was extremely high in sugar. People were not aware of this and assumed that they were consuming a healthy fat-free diet, when in fact could be high in sugar which contributed to Type 2 diabetes.

In addition Councillor Gunn added that food donations to food banks, although appreciated, were sometimes processed, high in carbohydrates, fat and sugar, and consideration should be given to improving the type of food that was donated.

Mr Kinch referred to a headline from a daily newspaper which had suggested that takeaways were delivering to school gates and queried whether the Consultant in Public

Health had any knowledge of this happening in County Durham. In response the Consultant in Public Health advised that he had only heard anecdotal evidence that when schools held evening events sometimes takeaway food was brought in, but acknowledged that this did not fit with school food plans.

Resolved:

That recommendation as outlined in the report be approved.

9 Performance Management Q4

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Management Team which presented progress against the councils corporate basket of performance indicators, Council Plan and service plan actions and other performance issues for the Altogether Better for Children and Young People theme for the 2015/16 financial year (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager, Performance and Information Management presented the report and key issues with regards to the Quarter Four Performance Management Report.

It was noted that on page 92 the percentage of children looked after who had all of their reviews completed within required timescale was 91.3% and not 9.13% as stated in the report.

Councillor Hart suggested that the Committee should monitor CASCYP 30 to ensure that children waiting for CAMHS appointments did not have a lengthy wait as schools were not satisfied. The Strategic Manager, Performance and Information Management confirmed that this information would be fed back into the service lead.

Resolved:

That recommendation as outlined in the report be approved.

10 Refresh of the Work Programme

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided Members with an updated Work Programme for the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2016-17 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer provided Members with a presentation on the updated work programme and confirmed that a joint meeting with Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee would take place on 25 July 2016.

In response to a question from Councillor Hall regarding third sector involvement in the Review of Youth Support, the scrutiny officer advised that there was third sector involvement across all of the priority themes of the council. As such, it would affect all committees and therefore this would be a topic which was more suited to a Member Seminar. This was as advised by the Head of Children's Services at the previous meeting of the Committee. The outcome of the Review of Youth Support would be reported to the Committee after it had been presented to Cabinet.

With regards to the identification of an In-depth Scrutiny Review, Councillor Gunn referred to the minutes from 1 April 2016 which confirmed the possibility of undertaking a piece of work on exclusions and managed moves between schools. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that an Educational Services Update would be provided to the Committee on 5 September 2016 and following which, Members could consider a working group if the information presented did not meet expectations.

Resolved:

That recommendation as outlined in the report be approved.

11 Verbal update on Review of Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer provided Members with a verbal update regarding the Review of Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger.

Members of the working group had met with teachers and students whilst on a site visit at Seaham School of Technology, where they had observed their biometric system in operation.

The Working Group had raised a number of issues with regards to the biometric system, such as not giving students on free school meals confidentiality and also being able to gain unauthorised access to another students balance.

The Group had considered some parents were concerned about sharing their personal financial information to apply for FSM, however it had been confirmed that a National Insurance Number was all that was needed and Members had agreed that requesting it as early as the school application process, would ensure that all eligible children were identified.

With regards to holiday hunger, the meeting with students from Seaham School had established that children wanted organisations to focus on activities rather than food when arranging school holiday provision.

Members had heard from the Principal Co-ordinator at East Durham AAP, who had confirmed that The Holiday Programme had been initiated to tackle holiday hunger. Voluntary organisations could apply to the Holiday Activity Fund and receive a grant to assist them in addressing holiday hunger as part of any activities they were providing. Members were keen to consider East Durham AAP when benchmarking.

The Diocese of Durham and the Church Urban Fund had joined together to tackle poverty by launching Communities Together Durham, who had presented Members with a growing school holiday programme to tackle child poverty. The Church was providing funding to, and supporting community organisations to develop their own programmes, and also providing volunteers with training to enable them to host events more efficiently.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that a final working Group had been arranged for 5 July 2016 for Members to consider the key findings and conclusions and formulate recommendations.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.

12 Summary of Minutes from Children's and Family Partnership

Members noted the Summary of Minutes from the Children and Families Partnership (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the minutes be noted.