

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 **Thursday 26 September 2019 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor H Smith (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Potts, B Bainbridge, A Batey, D Bell, P Brookes, B Coult, R Crute, I Jewell, L Mavin, M Simmons, A Willis and M Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mrs J Norman and Ms R Evans

Also Present:

Councillor J Considine

Prior to the commencement of business the Chair informed members of a Special joint meeting of the Children and Young People's, Adults, Wellbeing and Health and Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees on 17 December 2019 to discuss proposals to the extension of fluoridisation.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Blakey, N Grayson and C Hampson, and from Mrs P Parkin.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillor B Coult declared a personal interest in minute numbered 8 regarding the Ofsted Education Framework and took no part in the discussion.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

Ms Evans asked how schools and young people were contributing to reducing their carbon footprint and if this Committee could provide information to members as part of its scrutiny role. The Chair suggested that this be considered at a future meeting, and the Education and Children and Young People's Services be asked what actions were proposed to contribute towards the Council's targets to make the county carbon neutral.

6 Media Relations

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

- Call for review of impact poverty has on Education
- Number of over 16s going into care increases 25% in four years, report finds
- Funding boost to help combat holiday hunger
- Mental health support for young people to increase

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2018/19

The Committee considered the Annual Report of the Independent Chair of County Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) for 2018/19 (for copies see file of minutes).

The Independent Chair reported that this was the final report prior to transitioning to the new statutory partnership arrangement known as the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The report described the work undertaken against the LSCB's 2018-2019 priorities and described local governance arrangements and links to other strategic partnerships across County Durham.

Members were also informed of the transitional arrangements to the new Partnership which commenced on 1 April 2019, three months ahead of the national schedule.

Members discussed the Annual Report.

Referring to the Local Safeguarding data for 2018/2019, Councillor Brookes asked why there was a reported reduction in children subject to a Child Protection Plan in the year, when there had been an increase in children in the looked after system. The Independent Chair responded that it was difficult to give precise reasons; children coming into care were in crisis and had increasingly complex needs. The Partnership recognised that since 2016 there had been a sustained increase in children in care, and he assured the member that the Partnership would explore in further the data in respect of both these priority areas.

The member also noted that funding levels had remained the same in 2018/2019 and asked why the annual financial contributions received from partner agencies had not increased to support the work of the Partnership. The Independent Chair explained that a decision was made to maintain existing levels as part of the transition process due to the uncertainty around the funding the new Partnership would need. In accordance with national guidelines funding must be 'proportionate and equitable' and the Partnership was due to meet with key partners in this year's budget round to discuss contribution levels going forward.

Resolved:

- a) That the content of the report be noted;
- b) the 2018/2019 Annual Report of Durham Local Safeguarding Children's Board be endorsed.

8 Ofsted Education Framework 2019

The Committee considered a report and presentation by the School Leadership Advisor which provided members with information relating to the new Ofsted Education Framework (for copy see file of Minutes).

The School Leadership Advisor reported that the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) came into effect from 2 September 2019 following extensive consultation, and changed the way Ofsted inspected schools, FES institutions and Early Years settings. The presentation addressed:

- The main changes
- Key Threads in the EIF
- Inspector's judgements
- Gradings
- The Ofsted Report

Councillor Crute referred to the funding regime and expressed concern about reducing teacher numbers in schools which were struggling financially and the

increasing workloads of those remaining. He accepted that Ofsted had no involvement in the funding regime, which was the responsibility of the Department for Education but asked if a school's financial circumstances was a consideration in an Ofsted judgement. The School Leadership Advisor stated that the new Framework provided an opportunity for the Ofsted Inspector to engage with schools during inspections to discuss matters such as financial circumstances and teacher numbers.

Following a question from Councillor Kennedy about the use of 'gaming' which she considered was a means to give children with behavioural issues a fresh start, the School Leadership Advisor clarified what was meant by gaming by Ofsted.

Councillor Jewell considered that the inspection process should be supportive and able to identify good practice, helping schools improve performance. The member asked how the Framework would achieve this. The member was informed that the new Framework enabled the Inspectors to engage in quality dialogue with Headteachers about the children in their schools. Good practice guidance for schools would be published.

Mrs Norman referred to the changes to gradings and how this would be communicated to the public. The members were informed that this had not been determined to date but Ofsted recognised the importance of good communication, particularly as fewer providers would be deemed to be outstanding. The barre had been raised with the new gradings.

Councillor Brookes noted that the new inspection regime would not rely on performance data to the same extent. However he considered that parents would look at data when making school choices. The School Leadership Advisor acknowledged that data would be considered by parents but the new Ofsted report would be more accessible and clearer, and would include information that would assist parents to make informed school choices.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be received.

9 Consultation on High Needs Block funding for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Inclusion Support

The Committee considered a report and presentation of the Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children which outlined the approach and scope of a public consultation that was underway on proposals to help reduce spending pressures on the High Needs Block funding for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Inclusion Support (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children gave a presentation to members on the consultation which commenced on 17 July 2019 and ended on 17 October 2019. The presentation included:

- An outline of current challenges
- The consultation approach and proposals
- The Consultation Plan
- The next steps and recommendations

Councillor Jewell asked how many responses had been received and if this was monitored periodically. The member also asked what action was being taken to encourage people to engage in the process. The member was informed that 65 responses had been received when the consultation was initially launched, and following a refresh of figures the latest total had risen to 168. The service was promoting the consultation via social media and leafleting, and there were community events running until the end of the consultation period. The service was targeting community support groups, focus groups, School Governors and the Schools Forum. A short survey had been sent to all schools.

Councillor Brookes referred to the budget deficit and asked if there was any data in relation to forecasted demand, given that demand for the service was increasing. The member was informed that core school funding was expected to increase so the financial position would be improved next year. In terms of the deficit the service had started to make savings and efficiencies, and costs were being reduced without impacting upon service delivery. The situation was monitored on a monthly basis and with improved forecasting this would assist in bringing the deficit into balance in the required 3 years.

Ms Evans stressed the importance of maintaining the trust developed with families which was brought about by changes in 2014 and which had improved the way the service was provided for the better. She hoped that this would not be affected.

Councillor Crute stated that he was concerned that the spending increase had been an announcement not a settlement, and asked if there had been any national lobbying of the Government. The member was informed that lobbying had been carried out by the County Council's network, the Local Government Association, and Cabinet Member Councillor Gunn had written to the Government and met with the Children's Minister. A National Audit Office Report had found shortcomings in the DfE response to financial pressures, much of which was based on resources for reforms. This would feed into the Comprehensive Spending Review. A link to the National Audit Office Report would be sent to members.

Councillor Coult stressed that top-up funding was vital. The process was extremely stressful and it was important to streamline the system wherever possible. The member was assured that a key aim of the consultation was to work with local

families, community groups and schools to shape how best the needs of children were met within the funding available.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report and the consultation proposals, be noted.

10 Quarter One 2019/20 Performance Management Report

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which presented progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework for the Altogether Better for Children and Young People priority theme (for copy see file of Minutes).

Following a question from Councillor Bainbridge, the member was informed that data for kinship carers was being examined with the new Fostering and Adoption Team, with a view to including performance figures in future reports.

Councillor Crute referred to data in respect of free school meals and the percentage take up of 80%. The member asked where the budget for the 20% that was not taken up was re-allocated. The member was informed that the data formed part of a national return and was a 'snapshot' of school meals in one given day. Durham performed well nationally in terms of free school meal take-up.

Resolved:

- a) That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter one performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance be noted;
- b) data in respect of kinship carers be explored with a view to inclusion in future reports;
- c) officers investigate if the remaining budget was re-allocated when free school meals were not taken up.

11 Budget Outturn 2018/2019 Quarter 4

The Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources and Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which provided details of the 2018/2019 revenue and capital outturn for Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) and highlighted major variances in comparison with the budget as at 31 March 2019 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the CYPS revenue and capital outturn for 2018/19 be noted.

12 Budget Forecast 2019/2020 Quarter 1

The Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources and Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which provided details of the forecast outturn budget position for the CYPS service grouping, and highlighted major variances in comparison with the budget for the year, based on the position to the end of June 2019 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the forecast CYPS revenue and capital outturn for 2019/20 be noted.