

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 **Monday 13 January 2020 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor H Smith (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Potts, P Atkinson, B Bainbridge, A Batey, J Blakey, J Charlton, B Coult, R Crute, C Hampson, K Hopper, I Jewell, L Mavin, M Simmons and M Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mrs J Norman

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bell and A Willis, and Ms R Evans and Mrs P Parkins.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 and 27 November 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Coult declared a personal interest in item no. 7.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from co-opted Members or interested parties.

6 Media Relations

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

- Award for Inspirational social worker who helped set up County Durham Academy - Northern Echo 3/12/19
- Child Poverty in North East 'at Worst' level in memory - Northern Echo 5/12/19
- More than 28% of England's secondary schools now in the red, study finds - Guardian 19/12/19
- Troubled Families programme gets £165m cash boost - BBC 6/1/20

Councillor Potts reminded Members who were also school governors, that there was a school benevolent fund which was in place to assist families in need with the cost of school uniform.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Mainstream Primary and Secondary School Funding Formula 2020-21 and High Needs Block

The Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on mainstream primary and secondary formula funding arrangements for the coming financial year and the approach to setting the local formula for mainstream primary and secondary funding in 2020-21, and a presentation from the Head of Finance & Transactional Services (for copies see file of minutes).

The Head of Financial and Transactional Services advised members that funding formulas were due to be replaced next year but the government were satisfied that the local authority was moving forward. The funding was allocated on a lag basis using numbers from the previous financial year. This had both challenges and benefits, but it was impossible to work out funding on an in-year basis.

Members were advised that the national funding formula (NFF) benefitted schools in more affluent areas and areas of deprivation were least likely to benefit. It did not protect schools from falling rolls.

In response to a question from Mrs Norman about the number of schools who may be affected negatively from the change to the NFF, the Head of Finance & Transactional Services confirmed that all schools would benefit from the changes, however this area would not benefit as much as others. Had 4% been applied to all schools, they would have received more. Modelling which had been done to assist in the response to the consultation, could be provided and in response to a further question on whether any feedback to the Councils response had been received, the Head of Finance & Transactional Services confirmed that an acknowledgement of receipt had been received, but no feedback.

Councillor Jewell referred to the deficit of the High Needs Block (HNB), noting a shortfall in 20/21 and asked how long it would take to recover the balance. The Head of Finance & Transactional Services confirmed that the HNB was operating in a negative reserve and expenditure needed to be brought in line with grant funding received. For a period of time there would need to be an underspend in order to pay back the deficit, which was forecast at £2 million if nothing else changed. There was a HNB Sustainability Plan in order to reduce the deficit. The Council had formerly been given 3 years to recover any deficit to the HNB but there had been two significant changes to regulations;

- To prevent Council Tax money being used to top up
- Councils would now be given 'a reasonable period' to recover the deficit.

The plan had been prepared on that basis that a period of 5 years was reasonable. The Chair thanked the Head of Financial and Transactional Services for providing members with the information.

The Chair confirmed that Ms Evans had emailed to ask if the information was communicated to the public, in particular parents and carers and the Head of Finance & Transactional Services confirmed that the information was published and schools were given the information, however it would be a decision of the school as to whether they cascaded it to parents. He suspected parents would not be sent individual letters however the information was available as schools published their individual finance reports.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted and the Committee continue to monitor progress towards implementation of the National Funding Formula.

8 Child Poverty in County Durham

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which on the progress of the Child Poverty Working Group (CPWG) in addressing child poverty in County Durham, and a presentation from the Strategic Manager – One Point/Think Family Services (for copies see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager advised that over one fifth of children under 16 lived in low-income families and that across County Durham it was inequitably distributed between a low of 0.8% to a high of 59%.

It was noted that with regards to obesity in children, areas of deprivation recorded the highest numbers, and there were less activities provided and more access to hot food takeaways in these areas.

The Child Poverty Working Group (CPWP) included working towards the poverty pledge which involved working with schools and other organisations to identify a champion for child poverty. The CPWP had worked with more than 100 schools across the County, providing practical advice in cutting the cost of the school day. They had delivered activities with food during school holidays; family centres had provided poverty offer that had included personal hygiene boxes, surplus food and clothes.

The Strategic Manager advised of the three key ways County Durham has identified to tackle child poverty; Language and values associated with child poverty; poverty management in communities linked to early help; and economic inclusive growth approach.

Members were advised of future plans that included a County Durham Poverty Conference, the launch of the poverty pledge, develop holiday activities with the healthy food programme 2020, and revise the plan on a page.

Councillor Atkinson asked if success could be anticipated with regards to the Department of Education (DfE) grant funding bid for the development of free holiday provision to include healthy food and activities. The Strategic Manager - OP/Think Family Services confirmed that £150k of New Burdens Funding had been awarded to pilot a programme to provide holiday activities with healthy food across County Durham. This would be allocated by AAP's and areas with high levels of deprivation would be prioritised. There was a reliance on local groups to provide activities, but many were unaware of how to access free food. Charitable organisations such as Fareshare recycled food waste which would otherwise go to landfill and this was information which the service was trying to better coordinate.

Councillor Charlton confirmed that she had held school holiday brunch club and found it difficult to engage with families who were known would benefit. She had sent letters via the school, but as there were no exclusions, the children who attended tended to be those who were not from struggling families.

Councillor Bainbridge agreed that in her local area the activities worked well as she had volunteered in the school holidays and given out food in Chester le Street hub. She added that the provision of holiday food had to be disguised as an addition to the activity, otherwise it would be seen as a handout and families would not participate. Councillor Bainbridge asked what was being done to increase the uptake of the Healthy Start Vouchers.

The Strategic Manager - OP/Think Family Services, confirmed that the DfE bid was offering food as an element of holiday provision. There was ongoing work with Midwives, Health Visitors and Social Workers through family centres, to recognise and encourage those who could access Healthy Start Vouchers.

Finally, Councillor Bainbridge referred to Woodhouse Close which had been described as the most deprived area in the County, and asked what was being done to assist those families who were struggling in the area. The Strategic Manager - OP/Think Family Services, confirmed that there was a family centre in Woodhouse Close and a poverty offer, surplus food was donated from local suppliers and there was a clothes bank and access to the credit union. There was also a programme 'Big Cook, Little Cook' where children and parents were invited to learn how to cook on a budget.

Councillor Crute was appalled that children were going to school in this County without food and he said that it was important that the impact of these measures were tracked. The Child Poverty Working Group and Poverty Action Steering Group had taken measures but how were outcomes tracked and how would the service ensure accurate monitoring in future. He asked how the impact of the initiatives to alleviate child poverty that were

planned or being undertaken, would be evaluated alleviate child poverty. The Strategic Manager - OP/Think Family Services confirmed that take up of activities and access to services such as the credit union, was used to track impact, however the overall impact was multi-faceted as there were many other areas of work which would improve the lives of families' in the County – assisting parents into work. Child poverty would be maintained as a key priority, but she also added that the Council may need to lobby government and stress the issues.

Councillor Jewell highlighted that it was possible that some struggling families were missed due to the way poverty was measured – he asked how the Council could identify a strategy to measure effectiveness and asked how the grant funding would be coordinated if the bid was successful. The Strategic Manager - OP/Think Family Services replied that part of the single assessment was to ask for confirmation of income so that they could ensure they were accessing the services that were available to them. There was a child poverty conference planned later in the year, and this would be pivotal in determining, with partners, the next steps.

The Chair asked that a further update be received to a future meeting.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

9 Draft Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and the Director of Public Health which presented the draft Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and a joint presentation from the Strategic Manager – Partnerships and the Partnerships Team Manager (for copies see file of minutes).

The presentation included the vision of the Health and Wellbeing Board and detailed information on the three key strategic priorities.

Members were advised that the draft strategy proposed three strategic priorities;

- Starting Well – which focused on care in pregnancy, early years, childhood and adolescence and how these play a key part in health and wellbeing of adults
- Living Well – which consisted of the economic and environmental factors which lead to good health in adulthood
- Ageing Well – which focused on the number and quality of healthy years, independent lives and good quality end of life care

The Strategic Manager, Partnerships, confirmed that the draft strategy was open to consultation until 14 February 2020. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer in conjunction with the Chair, would respond on behalf of the Committee but and encouraged Members to send individual comments.

Mrs J Norman queried whether the strategy was dependent on funding, and in particular whether the strategy would be affected if public health services suffered a predicted loss of £19m. The Strategic Manager – Partnerships confirmed there was no indication with

regards to funding yet, but there was a potential risk to delivering all key priorities with a reduced public health budget.

The Chair noted that the priorities which had been identified in the draft strategy covered the whole life course and gave Members the opportunity to comment.

In response to a comment from Councillor Jewell, the Strategic Manager – Partnerships agreed that in the past priorities had been more specific but had been broadened.

Mrs Norman suggested that it would be helpful for the info graphs to contain comparative information with regional and national figures to provide some context.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted and a response to the consultation be provided on behalf of the Committee.

10 Performance Management Quarter 2

The Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources which presented progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the Council's corporate performance framework aligned to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

11 CYPS Revenue and Capital Outturn Forecast - Quarter 2

The Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources which presented progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the Council's corporate performance framework aligned to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 Such other business

The Chair confirmed that the Elective Home Education Review Group had formulated recommendations and a draft report would go to Cabinet in Spring 2020. She asked the Committee to consider a topic to scrutinise and to consider the timescale for submitting a report to Cabinet prior to the County Council elections in 2021.

She reiterated a number of topics which had been suggested during prior meetings, breastfeeding, smoking during pregnancy and Education Health and Care Plans and confirmed that this could be discussed again at the Special meeting in February.

The Chair confirmed that a meeting would take place at Durham Johnston Comprehensive School on 2 March 2020.