

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 7 April 2017 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor C Potts (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, D Bell, K Corrigan, C Hampson, J Hart, D Hicks, S Morrison, M Nicholls, L Pounder and H Smith

Faith Community Representative:

Mrs A Swift

Co-opted Members:

Mr J Conlon

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O Gunn, K Hopper and P Stradling

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

6 Progress on the Implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy

The Committee received a joint report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships and the Corporate Director of Children and Adults Services that provided an update on progress on the Implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Manager for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion gave a presentation about SEND (special educational needs and/ or disabilities) that highlighted the following (for copy see file of Minutes):-

- The Vision – every opportunity for children & young people to take control and achieve their potential
- Strategy Priorities – co-production, person centred approach & outcome focussed
- Strategy
 - Participation
 - Promotion and Prevention
 - Personalisation
 - Preparing Adulthood
- County Durham Deprivation

In response to a question from Councillor Hart about funding, he was advised that £1.3m had been ringfenced for County Durham. Parent and individuals would be consulted with before any decisions were made.

Councillor Hart further asked about the performance levels and if they were realistic for SEND children and what impact this had upon mental health. The Strategic Manager explained that there were different levels of need and that the aim was for each child to achieve to their highest potential. The mental support was aligned to the strategy and would be linked up.

The Strategic Manager advised that they did work with schools and academies further to a question from Councillor Hart. The Head of Education added that one academy had opted out but was part of a trust with Sunderland, and therefore there was not a lot of contact or influence with this school.

Councillor Hart went on to ask if the demand was falling for County Durham and was advised that the service were seeing a change in need rather than seeing an increase in the demand. There was an increase in living longer and a higher level of more complex needs. The Head of Education added that there had been an increase in children with autism but that schools were very good at meeting the needs of children.

Councillor Armstrong asked how this would be rolled out to school governors and was advised that there was a SEND representative on every school governing panel and that there was a framework in place. Referring to the joint Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspection the Strategic Manager advised that they would get five days' notice but assured Members that they were prepared and ready for inspection.

The Chairman asked that should this occur the Committee should be made aware so that they could keep an oversight.

The Strategic Manager for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion gave a second presentation about the Children, Young People and Families Plan that highlighted the following (for copy see file of Minutes):-

- The Vision – ambitions for all children & young people in County Durham
- Objectives – children and young people realise and maximise their potential, make healthy choices and have the best start in life, a think family approach in embedded in our support for families
- SEND Strategy
- Governance Arrangements
- Making Changes Together - Parent Carer Forum – helping to shape provision
- eXtreme – Children and Young People Forum – helping to shape provision
- SEN population – Education Health Care Plans, EHC Plan Process, Early Years, KS2 & KS4, further education, employment and training
- What you will find through each key age phase and transition

Councillor Nicholls asked what percentage of parents were involved and was advised that every parent was involved in the process. The Strategic Manager added that the membership of the Parent Forum was 100+ and the steering group ran events with approximately 300 parents in attendance. He said that it was a very engaging process with parents having access to twitter, facebook and the local offer.

Councillor Smith suggested that on the last slide it should read 'to achieve their aspirations' as it would read better. The Strategic Manager thanked Councillor Smith for her comment and this would be changed. The Head of Education added that this was the first draft that was being shared with Scrutiny and that it was helpful to receive feedback.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Manager for his presentations.

Resolved:

That the report and presentations be received and noted.

7 Education Attainment and Standards 2016 - Education Service Update

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that provided a full summary of educational outcomes in County Durham, and related updates on the focus and provision of education services (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Education gave a detailed presentation that highlighted the following (for copy see file of Minutes):-

- Overarching message from the report – children and young people in County Durham continue to perform very well
- Early years
 - % good level of development – significant areas of deprivation whereby some children were not ready for school i.e. still in nappies and unable to hold a knife & fork. Level with national average.
 - Free early education places in line with national targets – challenge to persuade some families to take up places and a challenge in finding enough places.
- Key Stage 1 – doing well against national measures reflecting well in the schools leadership and governing bodies

- Key Stage 2 – surpassing national averages and for those most vulnerable children support through free school meals
- Key Stage 4 – performing around the national average.
- Key Stage 5 – no national indicators

Councillor Hart asked if the target for year 2 phonics was possible to reach as involved a small number of children with SEND. The Head of Education said that schools were working hard to deliver training and to share good practice. The whole cohort did include SEND children and she acknowledged that some children did not have any communication skills and therefore, some children would not reach the target. Councillor Hart further asked if the data was meaningful to collect and was advised that it was mandatory to collect the data. She added that realistically some children were very able but would not reach the phonics test target but they would keep a focus on it.

Referring to the move to teacher assessments the Head of Education stated that the local authority carried out a sample basis throughout the County, further to a point raised by Councillor Hart. The Head of Education further explained that each school carry out school assessments every year and was part of the teachers performance management. Mrs Swift added that a lot of time was taken up by moderating other schools, and that assessment was the best way as the teachers knew the children very well.

Councillors Nicholls was pleased to see targets being reached by people pulling together and working together.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Education for a very encouraging and positive report.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

The Head of Education played a DVD from the pupils of the Woodlands, the former Pupil Referral Unit, that showcased the positive work going on at the school, how pupils view learning and their education, and the fact that they should be given a second chance.

She informed the Committee that the children had chosen the new name for the school and the uniform. She advised that the two primary schools in the County were the Willows and the Beeches.

Councillor Armstrong commented that the Willows was a fabulous school that had excellent partnership working.

Councillor Hicks said that it was a brilliant idea to change the name as would help get rid of the stigma attached to it.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Education for sharing the DVD as it showed a very positive step forward and that choosing the name of the school would help give the children a sense of ownership.

8 Quarter 3 Performance Management 2016/17

The Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Management Team which presented progress against the council's corporate performance framework for the Altogether Better for Children and Young People priority theme for the second quarter of the 2016/17 financial year, covering the period October to December 2016 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager, Performance and Information Management reported that the recent recruitment of social workers had been successful and that the oversight of the Corporate Parenting Panel would be strengthened with the inclusion of Scrutiny and Cabinet Members.

With reference to looked after children the Committee were informed that there had been an increase from 661 cases last year to 785 this year. This area would be closely monitored as could have some budget implications moving forward.

A more positive message was reported for children in care with the number of referrals dropping to 3723 from 4616, with the re-referral rate dropping by 20%.

There had been improvements in the latest figures for child protection reviews, up to 94% at the end of the year, and the under 18 conception rate continued to reduce. However, childhood obesity continued to see an increase. Four local authorities would take part in a pilot programme for Public Health England with a focus on early years and the ante-natal unit.

The Chairman expressed concerns at the childhood obesity figures rising, despite the Committee's best efforts to raise awareness and put measures in place.

Councillor Nicholls said that to give children the best start in life it was important for schools to teach PE, and encouraged that this came back on board.

The Strategic Manager, Performance and Information Management said that a survey had been conducted with all primary and secondary schools with one of the questions asking how children see PE in school. The feedback from this may help understand how children take part in physical activity in and out of school. He would feed this back to members.

Councillor Hart commented that some schools have individual programmes to support PE and best practice should be shared.

Mrs Swift said that it was a challenge for schools and that most schools would make PE a priority if they had time however, Maths and English were priority subjects. She suggested that lifestyle challenges such as children using iPads, being taken everywhere in cars instead of walking and the diet were part of the problem. She said that head teachers like herself had asked what could they stop doing in order to fit in more PE.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 Quarter 3 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2016/17

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Financial & HR Services which provided the Committee with details of the forecast outturn budget position for the CAS service grouping, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget for the year, based on the position to the end of September 2016 as reported to Cabinet in November (for copy see file of minutes).

Mrs Swift referred to paragraph 14 of the report in relation to the schools reserves budget that had reduced to £13.7 million and asked if there were concerns going forward for the 2018/19 budget.

The Finance Manager explained that the figure of £9.8 million would be used as a one off by schools to support the base budget. He further explained that this would be looked at on a school by school basis and work would be ongoing with schools to assess their budgets. Any problems would be raised with the school and the Corporate Director of Resources.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Refresh of the Work Programme for the Children & Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships, which provided Members with information contained within the Council Plan 2016-2019, relevant to Children and Young People's Services. This would allow members to refresh the Committee Work Programme to reflect the 3 objectives and subsequent outcomes identified within the Council Plan or Altogether Better for Children and Young People (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that this was the last opportunity for members to consider the work programme and welcomed any comments. She reported that last year had been very productive and a very busy year for the Committee.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report be noted
- (ii) That a further report be brought to Committee on 4 July 2017.

The Chairman placed on record her thanks to all Members for their valuable contribution over the last year.