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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 11 November 2019

Present:

Councillor W Clements (Chair)

Councillors	K Cannon	J Johnson
	Y Nolan	I Lewis
	J Robinson	C Povall
	S Spoor	A Wright
	KJ Williams	C Carubia
	G Wood	C Cooke

20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Julie Johnson, the representative from the Diocese of Shrewsbury, had sent apologies and said that due to a lack of capacity in the Education Team they were unable to send a representative to meetings in future.

21 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

The Chairman noted that for Item 5 (Minute 24 – Summary of the Self Evaluation of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) most Councillors were school governors.

Councillor Jean Robinson declared a personal interest as she was connected with an Early Years Contract.

Councillor Ian Lewis declared a personal interest as a trustee of the Leasowe Play Youth and Community Association.

Councillor Sarah Spoor declared a personal interest as a member of PCPW - Parent, Carer, Participation Wirral.

Councillor Chris Cooke declared a personal interest as a supply teacher in Wirral and Merseyside.

Councillor Wendy Clements declared a personal interest in Item 6 as she was employed as an Early Years Educator and Administrator for Moreton Baptist Preschool.

There were no declarations made in respect of the application of a party whipping arrangement.

The Chairman noted that the Council was in the pre-election purdah period and Members were to be mindful when asking questions.

22 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 September 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23 **FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 2 2019/20**

The Principal Accountant introduced this report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Children Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The report provided Members with detail to scrutinise budget performance for this area of activity. It covered the financial information as at quarter 2 2019/20 and included performance against the revenue budget (including savings) and performance against the capital budget.

Members noted the increase in the numbers and more complex needs being presented which had led to pressure on budgets, as well as the increase in costs from providers. Members also noted the forecast that many schools would be in a deficit position in the next financial year, although school's budgets did not directly affect Service budgets.

Resolved - That the Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 2 be noted.

24 **SUMMARY OF THE SELF EVALUATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES**

The Assistant Director for Education presented a summary of the self-evaluation undertaken by all partners working with Special Educational Needs and Disabled (SEND) young people and their families. There was a SEND strategy in place and plans to review and refresh it between November 2019 and May 2020, working with parents and partners. The evaluation was detailed in the presentation and had focussed on the areas of: identifying needs; meeting the needs; and improving outcomes, and for each of those it analysed local work and resources and areas for development. The self-evaluation process had enabled a collective view in the Local Area to celebrate progress as well as identifying the twelve months work programme.

Members noted that there had been changes in staffing, a projected budget deficit of £7 million by 2022 and both a Strategic Board and Operations Group for all those involved to help improved services.

Members questions drew out some issues including:

- Between 55% and 70% of Education, Health and Care Plans were completed within set deadlines, and those not were generally because answers were awaited from services.
- Despite budget cuts, schools had a threshold and guide to enable SEND pupils to receive quality teaching. More funding had been

provided although pupil numbers were increasing. Expertise was shared when available.

- The destinations of SEND pupils leaving education was monitored.
- Figures did not include those home schooled though that is monitored separately.
- The service works with the All Age Disability Service.
- The 25% increase in pupils with SEND in a year was largely due to a higher number of younger children with complex learning difficulties, and better identification of SEND pupils.

Resolved – that the key areas of development work from the summary of the self-evaluation of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities be noted.

25 DOMESTIC ABUSE

The Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention and the Head of the Integrated Front Door service introduced the report which provided an overview of provision to support children, adults and families affected by domestic abuse. The report set out the national and local context, described findings of an in-house review and outlined next steps to improve services and reduce the detrimental impact of domestic abuse on Wirral residents.

Various details were presented to Members, including:

- On the Wirral, 13% of recorded crime was domestic abuse, 40% involved families with children, with 62% of those children directly harmed.
- The Integrated Front Door was the first point of contact but provision was somewhat fragmented and included gaps.
- There were fortnightly multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) meetings which discussed about 40 families, and a daily domestic abuse meeting for high-risk and high-impact domestic abuse referrals
- A multi-agency group was looking to create a strategy, and some services required a review.
- Members would be updated about changes and progress.

Members questions were responded to appropriately and raised some issues, including:

- The Leapfrog group, which dealt with about 5 families where children had behavioural difficulties, had a waiting time of approximately 6 months.
- Zero tolerance could be a barrier to reporting and acceptance, and targets may be better having a more comprehensive performance framework.

Resolved – that the findings of the in-house review be noted and the progress to improvement of services be reported in 3-months, 6-months and 9-months to ensure suitable progress is made.

26 **REVIEW OF THE YOUTH OFFER**

The Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention introduced this report which was an update on progress of the Youth Offer Review and findings of a consultation undertaken with young people. The report, *Care More About Us*, captured the voice of young people on what they liked to do and what they wanted a future Youth Offer to include, and was accompanied by a video of the young people stating their wishes. The findings of the consultation and survey were alongside data on usage of youth provision. The report also provided detail on steps towards collaboratively developing a business case for a new Youth Offer by February 2020.

Members questions drew out some issues including:

- Young people wanted places where they felt safe and welcomed. Libraries could offer this and be a meeting space with a sense of community.
- Any information resource would be better designed with the young people and be on the platforms that they preferred.
- Consistent opportunities across the Borough was one recurring theme, and there was a perception of Birkenhead being a focus of initiatives.

Resolved - that

- (1) the findings of the Youth Offer Consultation and progress made to date be noted;**
- (2) the next steps be endorsed; and,**
- (3) the collaboration between the young people of Wirral and public services be supported.**

27 **OFSTED IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Director for Children's Services presented this report which provided an overview of the progress which had been made following the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services. The findings of the inspection report rated the impact of leadership on social work practice as 'good' and the experience and progress of children in need of help and protection, and children in care, as 'requires improvement'. The report outlined 5 key areas for improvement which formed the basis of Wirral's Ofsted Improvement Plan with specific, measurable and realistic actions which were to provide the direction and focus for the following year. The report also outlined the governance framework which ensured that progress could be monitored, and relevant officers held to account for the delivery of the Plan.

The key areas and actions were detailed as:

1. The Assessment and planning:
 - Stockport Council had been engaged in undertaking full review of Supporting Families, Enhancing Futures (SFEF), supported by DfE guidance
 - Practice Observations policy and procedure had been implemented as part of launch of new Practice Improvement Team
 - Review of SFEF training initiated
2. Transitions:
 - Review of assessment procedures and pathways had been initiated with adult services to ensure that assessments are robust
3. Emotional health and wellbeing:
 - Good progress of re-commissioning of contract to support emotional health and wellbeing of CLA
 - Project to explore 'our space' hub for care leavers supported and initiated
4. Education:
 - Launch of attendance campaign at beginning of November
 - Improved 'live' data of CLA in education
5. Life story work:
 - Project exploring digital life story work initiated
 - Life story practice champions appointed

In addition to the Ofsted Improvement Plan, a wider Social Care Improvement Plan was under development to capture the wider areas for development within the Inspection report.

Members questions about aspects of the report were answered appropriately including:

- The reduction in children in need due to a better service from the family matters service
- There was a need for additional resource to reduce the time for mental health visits.

Resolved - that

- (1) the progress made in continuing with improvement following the Ofsted inspection in June be noted; and,**
- (2) the actions outlined within the Ofsted Improvement Plan against the 5 specific recommendations highlighted within the inspection report be endorsed.**

28 2019/20 QUARTER 2 WIRRAL PLAN PERFORMANCE

Members considered a report provided an overview of the progress in Quarter 2 (July- September 2019) performance for the Wirral Plan pledges under the remit of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Relevant Wirral Plan 2020 pledges were:

- Children are Ready for School
- Children are Ready for Work and Adulthood
- Vulnerable Children Reach their Full Potential
- People with Disabilities live Independent Lives
- Zero Tolerance to Domestic Violence

Resolved – that the content of the report be noted.

29 WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Committee Members considered the Work Programme for 2019-2020. The Committee, in co-operation with the other three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, were responsible for proposing and delivering an annual Scrutiny Work Programme. The Work Programme was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the Wirral Plan pledges which were within the remit of the Committee.

Resolved – That

- (1) the Work Programme Update Report be noted;**
- (2) the updated Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2019/20 be approved.**