

# CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 6 March 2024

Present: Councillor S Powell-Wilde (Chair)

Councillors P Basnett C Povall  
S Bennett V Wilson  
T Laing C Cooke  
L Luxon-Kewley J Grier  
K Hodson C Carubia

## 14 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast and reminded them that a copy of the webcast would be retained on the Council's website for two years.

## 15 APOLOGIES

The Chair informed the committee that no apologies had been received.

## 16 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interests in connections with any item on the agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Paula Basnett and the Chair both declared a personal interest as foster carers.

## 17 MINUTES

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.**

## 18 PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS

The Chair noted that no public questions, statements, or petitions had been received.

## **EARLY YEARS FUNDING ENTITLEMENT AGREEMENT**

The Early Years Operations Manager presented a report on behalf of the Director for Children, Families and Education which noted that the Early Years Funding Entitlement (EYFE) agreement was an annual agreement between Wirral Council and early years providers to deliver funded places to children under 5 years. The agreement was based on a template provided by the Department for Education and the template had been tailored for Wirral which included additional sections that supported relevant strategies such as attendance and summative assessment data.

The funding agreement covered the delivery of EYFE for children aged from nine months to five years, including Early Years Pupil Premium, Disability Access Fund and Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF). SENIF also had a guidance booklet. The funding agreement had been reviewed and updated for financial year 2024-2025 and early years providers had been consulted with the draft document for the previous three months.

Members sought clarity on how children might be considered to have witnessed abuse and who made that determination. They were informed that the Police looked at each case to determine if it met their referral threshold.

Members queried whether schools had capacity for provision and asked how parents were being communicated with and what would happen if funding could not be secured. They were informed that schools had been consulted and discussions had with headteachers in order to address capacity issues. It was noted that Wirral's marketing team had been promoting the service alongside a national campaign as well as further work with partners to engage with parents. Funding for provision had been secured in every case so far and the Department for Education supported funding for this.

Members queried if spaces for care would be given priority for non-working parents and whether working parents would be penalised. It was noted that the intake of children was not controlled by who received benefits or not but that the Council would push for equity in this matter with providers.

**Resolved – That the draft copy of the Early Years Funding Entitlement agreement for financial year 2024/25 be approved.**

## **2023-24 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER THREE**

The Finance Manager presented a report on behalf of the Director of Finance which set out the financial monitoring information for the Children, Young People and Education Committee as at Quarter 3 (1 Apr – 31 Dec) of 2023/24. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023/24 saving programme and a summary of reserves to enable the Committee to take

ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

The report noted that at the end of Quarter 3, there was a forecast adverse position of £0.364m on the Committees net revenue budget of £88.344m. This position was based on activity to date, projected trends in income and expenditure and potential mitigation to offset areas of adverse/favourable variance.

Members queried whether the figures for looked after children included unaccompanied asylum seekers and asked how many of those were in care in Wirral. Officers noted that they did and that the total number unaccompanied asylum seekers looked after was 17 out of 764 children looked after in total but noted that this figure changed frequently.

Members queried whether the restructuring of services would be noticed by parents in terms of capacity. Officers noted that while services were being remodelled to be more efficient, targets had been met the previous year and more were to be met this year, they noted that a further report on the remodelling of services would come to the committee in future.

Members raised the spending on the IT system used for Children's services and whether a bespoke system had been bought in. Officers noted that the system, called Liquid Logic, was already in use for social care and effectively was being expanded to cover the school system as well to help centralise information.

Members queried the senior management restructure costs and were informed that they were related to the creation of a Joint Health Commissioning post.

**Resolved - That:**

- 1. The forecast revenue position presented at Quarter 3 be noted.**
- 2. The progress on delivery of the 2023-24 savings programme at Quarter 3 be noted.**
- 3. The forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 3 be noted.**
- 4. The forecast capital position presented at Quarter 3 be noted.**

## **ADULT LEARNING ANNUAL ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-23 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Head of Service for 14-19 Strategy presented a report on behalf of the Director for Children, Families and Education which set out the service's developments, summary of delivery and learner achievements in the 2022/23 academic year.

It noted that grant funding received from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority was £1,173,362.

Wirral Council's Lifelong Learning Service actively engaged and supported local residents (aged 19+) who were furthest from the labour market. This education provision provided learners with the confidence to take the next steps back into education and employment. As a grant funded Council service, it had the capacity to support the most disadvantaged, working on difficult issues and using innovative approaches for example, supporting community cohesion, troubled families, Children's Centres, family learning, refugees and improving mental health through learning.

The report noted that the 2022/23 academic year was very challenging for the service with further growth in qualification course delivery, new test and learn projects plus continuation of the MULTIPLY maths intervention support programme.

The Lifelong Learning Service was inspected by Ofsted, February 2018, and assessed as 'Good'. The service was also MATRIX re-accredited, July 2020, recognising its integrated high-quality delivery of careers education and support for its learners.

The Head of Service for 14-19 Strategy noted a correction under paragraph 1.3 which should have read: "The overall number of course enrolments during 2022/23 has now reverted back to pre-Covid pandemic levels..."

Members discussed the number of courses a person was likely to be enrolled on during a year, whether there was a recorded benefit to children whose parents had enrolled on the Lifelong Service, whether the service had a successful impact on getting adults that had been through the service employed, how the courses were funded and how the needs of the customers was led. They also queried whether there were notable issues with enrolment numbers for term two.

Officers responded that one person was likely to be enrolled on two courses per year, that the benefit to children was anecdotal at the moment but that it felt that the impact was positive, that there was statistical evidence that the service helped those that used it to gain employment. They noted that funding was provided by the Liverpool City Region and was granted on a year by year

basis and that the needs of the service users was very much community led by listening to residents and third sector organisations. They noted that there had been no issues with enrolment numbers to date due to the strong work by their business support team.

### **Resolved – That**

- 1. the report be noted; and**
- 2. The services' planned improvements and recognise the contribution to improving the lives of adults and families in Wirral's more deprived communities during 2022/23 be endorsed and recognised.**

## **22 BREAKING THE CYCLE**

The Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention presented a report on behalf of the Director for Children, Families and Education which provided the committee with the third of three reports on the Breaking the Cycle programme, focused on system change. The Breaking the Cycle programme had been a key strand of the early help and prevention approach, informing long-term system change and contributing to demand reduction for acute services.

The report outlined how Children's Services would be remodelled in 2024 informed by best practice learning from the Breaking the Cycle programme and aligned with the new Children's Social Care National Framework (Department for Education, December 2023).

It noted that the Breaking the Cycle programme was a cross-Council, multi-agency programme which was producing valuable learning about the experiences of people facing multiple disadvantage and how well the local system responded to meeting current need and its planning to prevent future need. The Breaking the Cycle programme had provided opportunity to test and learn informing operational and strategic system change.

Members queried why Wirral had such a high rate of children looked after per 10,000 population, with Wirral at 117.5 in 2023, Wirral's statistical neighbours at 111 and the national average at 71. Officers noted that Wirral was good at bringing children into care but that once they were in the system, they generally stayed there. They noted that Wirral had been improving since 2019, with numbers coming into care lower than its statistical neighbours and that we would eventually fall to similar levels as children aged and left care.

Members queried the mechanisms for community co-design of services. They were informed that the service was developed through parent carer forums,

advisory boards in children's centres as well as third sector organisations and community partners.

Members stated that they were in favour of the programme and congratulated officers on the work that had been undertaken to date.

**Resolved – That the learning gained from the Breaking the Cycle programme be noted; and that the approach to remodelling Children's Services based on that learning and best practice be endorsed.**

## 23 ALL AGE DISABILITY STRATEGY

The Assistant Director of All Age Independence and Provider Services presented a report on behalf of the Director of Care and Health which presented the draft All Age Disability Strategy 2024-2029 for noting. The strategy formed part of the work programme as an outcome of all age disability review which was approved at the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee on the 13 June 2023.

The report noted that a high proportion (22.2%) of people in Wirral lived with some kind of disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010). This was 2.8% higher than across the North West and 4.9% higher than England. This proportion was projected to increase. Delivering Better Value analysis forecasted Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) caseloads in Wirral to increase from 2,700 in 2023, to 4,200 by 2028. These young people will age out of Children's into Adult Social Care, and with that bring increased expenditure.

The All Age Disability Strategy aimed to improve outcomes for the people in Wirral who had a disability. It also provided strategic direction for the next 5 years to enable the Council to plan ahead and provide improved services, across housing and employment, that support people to live as independently as possible and can prevent needs from escalating. Preventative care not only improves outcomes for residents but can reduce cost to councils across a resident's lifetime. With financial efficiencies identified for this service area over the coming years, it was necessary that this strategy was delivered to avoid future costs.

Members queried the timing of the report, which had been agreed in full the previous day by the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee. Members felt that the report should have come to them for comment prior to it being agreed. Officers noted Members feelings and noted that work had been done across both committees prior to it reaching them. It was agreed that in future a further workshop could be provided to Members of both committees before the report came before them.

Members queried why Wirral had such a high proportion of people with a disability compared the North West and National averages. The Assistant Director of All Age Independence and Provider Services offered to provide a briefing note to Members to give further detail on these figures.

**Resolved – That**

- 1. The coproduced draft All Age Disability Strategy 2024-2029, included as Appendix 1 to this report be noted; and**
- 2. The receipt of annual progress and impact reports of the implementation of the strategy be agreed.**

24 **ALL AGE DISABILITY REVIEW - IMPLEMENTATION**

The Assistant Director of All Age Independence and Provider Services presented a report on behalf of the Director of Care and Health which presented the progress to date on the implementation programme following the All-Age Disability Review that was approved at the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee on the 13 June 2023.

The report noted that there was a greater reliance in Wirral on more traditional care services, which led to Wirral being a higher spend Council on disability services. This could also mean that outcomes achieved for people with disabilities would not always help them to achieve aspirational targets or to be as independent as they could be. This could be improved through better alignment, joining up planning, and collaboration between services, as evidenced in the report following a review of Education, Health, and Care Plans. The experiences of people supported across the life course would be greatly improved by focussing upon their aspirations and life goals in a more effective and clear manner.

The report also noted that a high proportion (22.2%) of people in Wirral lived with some kind of disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010). This was 2.8% higher than across the Northwest and 4.9% higher than England. This proportion was projected to increase, for example Delivering Better Value analysis forecasts Special Education Needs Disability caseloads in Wirral to increase from 2,700 in 2023, to 4,200 by 2028. Whilst not all of these young people would require support for Adult Social Care, a number of these young people would transition and with that, the Council was likely to see increased expenditure.

Members queried the reason for only looking into 1.9% of Education, Health and Care Plans for analysis. Officers noted that the emphasis wasn't on the sample base but finding evidence on housing, employment and education and had looked at approx. 60 plans.

**Resolved – That the significant progress to date of the implementation programme following the All-Age Disability Review as in Appendix 1 be noted.**

**WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair introduced their report which reminded members that the Children, Young People and Housing Committee was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were the remit of the Committee.

**Resolved – That the work programme be noted.**