

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 24 January 2019

Present: Councillor T Usher (Chair)

Councillors D Burgess-Joyce Robinson
K Cannon KJ Williams
W Clements C Carubia
A Gardner T Anderson (In
C Povall place of P Hayes)
M McLaughlin J McManus (In
C Meaden place of EA Grey)
S Jones (In place of
G Wood)

In attendance: Councillor I Lewis

29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Grey, P Hayes and G Wood. The Committee also received apologies for absence from Co-opted Members Julie Johnson and Chris Penn.

30 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Members were reminded that they should also declare whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor Chris Meaden made a declaration of personal interest in respect of the agenda generally by virtue of her daughter's employment in the Children and Young People's Department.

Councillor Jean Robinson made a declaration of personal interest in respect of the agenda generally by virtue of her work in Early Years.

Councillor Julie McManus made a declaration of personal interest in respect of the agenda generally by virtue of her son's employment in a Primary School in Birkenhead.

31 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

32 **IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY AND DATA TRACKER UPDATE**

The Corporate Director for Children Services made a presentation to the Committee on the Children and Young People's Services' Improvement Journey. He provided:

- a summary of progress;
- feedback from Ofsted's Monitoring Visit;
- details of areas for Improvement;
- information on the Peer Challenge and Annual Conversation;
- priorities for the next 12 Months;
- feedback from a Member visit with Children in Care and Care Leavers;
- performance details; and
- workforce information.

The Corporate Director reported that Children's Services was no longer subject to monitoring visits as they had all been completed. The next Ofsted visit would be an inspection. It was expected that this would take place in April or May or possibly June 2019. The Corporate Director did not expect intervention at the end of this process and informed he was confident of a good outcome. He also informed that Wirral was a Council requiring improvement and the distance between that and good was considerable.

Members asked the Corporate Director a number of questions which were answered accordingly. Matters discussed included the following:

- Concerns about the Staying Put Scheme as it was evident that these children were 'kicked out' as soon as they were 18 years old. Some foster carers love the job they do but clearly others do it for the money they receive. Some children were being forced to leave after a number of years in care and housing for care leavers needed to be looked at.
- The robustness of Social Workers Performance Appraisals and monthly supervision. Most had undergone an annual appraisal last year (97%) and received regular supervision. The Team Managers were now beginning to coach best practice rather than just describing it. The Service was better at tracking performance issues, there was still some work to do but mechanisms were in place that made managing the Service somewhat easier.

- The forthcoming Workforce Survey which will ask direct questions about what it's like working in Wirral with anonymity.
- The quality of first line management, turn over and HR support.
- Liverpool City Council's intention to recruit 130 Social Workers. This seemed optimistic as the average life of a social worker was only seven years. Social Workers in Wirral may apply and be successful. The problems this may cause if they were seduced into going and the possibility of destabilising the whole of the Liverpool City region as Liverpool was offering higher salaries than most of the other Local Authorities in the City Region. There was a City Region development group which was led by someone from Wirral. Wirral needed to ask social workers who might be tempted to leave some questions about why they were thinking of doing that and make sure Wirral's social workers were not seduced into doing something that would not be good for them professionally.
- The Managers were a stable group and the Head of Practice Improvement has constructed a work programme for Team Managers. They are being developed rapidly including their skills in effectively managing Teams. The Corporate Director was working with the Department for Education (DFE) and the Improvement Board on this and the Improvement Board Chair who is a DFE Advisor is going to carry out some mentoring to bring Managers up to the level the Council needs them to be at. There was also a 'floating Team Manager' who was very experienced and had come from another Borough who was working specifically with Team Managers in the permanency Service to develop their confidence and their decision-making so that they become more effective and impactful. Team managers had the most difficult jobs of all. They were in practice but they also had to manage. A longer term proposal was to develop a programme for Team Managers.
- The number children placed outside of the borough was low and an officer who worked part time carried out visits.
- There was a critical crisis emerging in education around funding. There were also an increasing number of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the borough (30%) in the last five years, since the SEN reforms and there had been no additional funding. Many children with SEN were in main stream schools as there were not enough places in Special Schools. There was now also a requirement to extend support for those with SEN up to the age of 25 with no additional funding. The Government in its budget had released additional funding to go into the high needs block for 2019/20 which would go some way to closing the gap. There was within Wirral a potential £2m gap next year in the budget. There was an ongoing debate on whether Children's Services had adequate funding which seemed to demonstrate that there was a gap. The resources the Council had for SEN children and young people were being maximised

in terms of their needs. The findings of the SEN Review were awaited and the findings would be consulted upon.

- The discussions Members had with care leavers and how they had liked the Health Passports. They had had a positive impact as had the PAs who young people could talk to on a one to one basis. This showed the impact that could be made when Children's Services got it right. As part of the improvement journey Children's Services had to find ways to compensate the children for the things that had not been done well. It had to focus on the impact of not getting it right for children in the past.
- The Corporate Director believed that there was a good team in Children's Services and it was getting stronger. He was realistic about the outcome of the Inspection. If it is identified that Children's Services required improvement it is nowhere good enough but it is not because they are not trying it is because it is hard and they will have to catch up over the next two to three years going forward.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Corporate Director be thanked for his informative presentation;**
- (2) a report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee on the Staying Put Scheme as part of the next Improvement Journey Update; and**
- (3) Housing for Care Leavers be added to the Work Programme.**

33 SUMMARY OF STANDARDS PROVISIONAL OUTCOMES FOR KEY STAGE 4 AND KEY STAGE 5

The Lead School Commissioner presented a report that provided an executive summary and a more in depth analysis for the pupil outcomes at the age of 16 (GCSEs) as well as a brief summary of GCE outcomes.

It was reported that comparisons had been made with the results nationally wherever possible. However, many of the national results had not been published yet. When the statistical first releases were published the report would be amended.

It was noted that there had been ongoing changes to the content and grading system of GCSEs, making the subject content and exams far more challenging. In 2018 grading of outcomes in all curriculum subjects moved to a 9-1 scale, with grade nine being roughly equivalent to a top A* grade and a grade four equivalent to a low to mid-grade C.

Members were informed that in Wirral the percentage of pupils achieving a grade 4 or above in English continued to improve and was above the national average. Outcomes in English continued to be higher than in mathematics. Also, more disadvantaged pupils attained grade 4+ in English so the gap narrowed by 1.1%.

Members were also informed that nationally there was a decrease in the percentage of pupils achieving a grade 4 or higher in mathematics. In contrast Wirral's results continued to improve and were above the national average. More disadvantaged pupils had attained grade 4+ in mathematics so the gap had narrowed by 1.6%.

The percentage of Wirral pupils attaining a Grade 4+ in English and Mathematics was well above the national average and showed an improvement from last year.

The Committee noted that attainment of both boys and girls nationally had increased. It was a similar picture for Wirral pupils. Nationally the gender gap has decreased, however the gender gap in Wirral had widened because more girls achieved higher grades than the boys.

It was noted that overall the Progress 8 measure for Wirral had increased slightly to 0.04 and was above the national average of - 0.02 and the North West average of - 0.16. Wirral was ranked second in the North West.

The report provided a detailed analysis of pupil outcomes which could be used to measure the impact of work undertaken in the following pledges:

- Children are ready for school.
- Young people are ready for work and adulthood.
- Vulnerable children reach their full potential.

The report also provided a very detailed analysis of outcomes for all pupil groups at the end of Key Stage 4 and some very provisional key headlines for Key Stage 5 in the secondary phase of education.

Appended to the report was a paper that set out an Executive Summary in respect of the provisional outcomes at key stage 4 (November 2018).

Members asked the Lead School Commissioner a number of questions which were answered accordingly. Matters discussed included the following:

- South Wirral seemed not to be achieving but only because the figures were skewed when looking at this by locality. The A Level results would not be made available until March so Members were looking at average point scores etc. as the only comparisons currently available. There had been massive reform in respect of A Levels as there was no

longer course work or AS Levels. Girls out performed boys and there was a need to focus on improving boys' attainment.

- The headlines were very positive and demonstrated significant improvement and there was a pattern of general improvement emerging.
- There was not a standard way to teach maths. Officers were looking at strategies in place where it was done well.
- There were no Grammar Schools in Wallasey.

RESOLVED:

That the report and its appendix be noted.

34 PARTICIPATION AND DESTINATION ANALYSIS OF WIRRAL YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16 TO 19

Wirral has a complex post 16 education and learning landscape. Wirral's young people who made the transition at age 16 into further education and training had a number of options and pathways including school sixth form, further education (including study programme provision) and Apprenticeships. Post 16 opportunities were accessible locally. However, young people may choose to travel for specialist learning to a neighbouring local authority or beyond.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy Manager presented a report that identified the numbers of young people transitioning into post 16 learning and training opportunities whilst also assessing how successful they were by pathway. An analysis of learner attainment on entry to post 16 learning (all learning routes) had been completed in addition to valued added performance for some sectors. The report analysed the current destination data for Wirral young people upon leaving key stage 4 at age 16 and key stage 5 sixth form provision at age 18. In doing so the report supported Pledge 3 from the Wirral 20:20 Vision: Young people are ready for adulthood and employment.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy Manager informed that young people's post 16 participation rates in the borough were currently at or above sub-regional and regional averages. Challenges currently exist with recognised apprenticeship participation which was at an all-time low. To support this, schools and academies had to meet their statutory duty to provide robust, impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance. The Council must also ensure there was sufficient and suitable education and training provision to meet young people's needs.

The Committee noted that the national perspective on what was required of the education system in relation to young people beyond the age of 16 had changed significantly over recent years, and was continuing to evolve. There

had been a fundamental national reappraisal of the purpose of post-16 education and training, driven by the following three key factors:

- The Government's Post 16 Skills Plan aims to revitalise technical education policy with vocational 'T Levels' at the same level as A levels. Wirral's Further Education sector will need to ensure readiness to meet the opportunities presented by T Levels prior to 2020. The ability to offer quality work placements will underpin a shift-change in employer involvement.
- Government Apprenticeship reforms have resulted in all apprenticeships being real paid jobs; having a minimum duration of 12 months and involve sustained training and clear skills gain with at least 20% off-the-job training. The Government also introduced the Apprenticeship levy for large private and public sector employers from April 2017.
- There is an economic need to increase the number of young people receiving technical and vocational education to meet the demands of the future workforce. This demand is driven by a significant future need for new employees to replace those leaving an ageing workforce, and also the need for additional employees to meet the demands of economic growth. There is a political consensus that there should be an expansion in the number of young people taking apprenticeships and following work related education that is valued by Higher Education and/or Employers. This is necessary not only to meet labour market demands, but also to improve the employability of young people and thus further reduce the current levels of unemployment amongst young people.

It was noted that in addition to the national policy changes impacting on the roll and positioning of post 16 education there were also a number of substantial national developments which were influencing and shaping current and future services/delivery. The national influences having the greatest impact included:

- Qualifications are changing to become more demanding in the areas of both academic and vocational education. This is particularly so at GCSE level where the new english and maths curricular is extremely challenging.
- The apprenticeship reform agenda, including standards development, the removal of some level 2 opportunities and end point assessments are making this route way into employment inaccessible for some young people.

- The number of local post 16 training providers delivering on Wirral has reduced year on year as a result of real terms funding cuts, increasing study programme curriculum demands and inflexibilities and the challenges of meeting the needs of vulnerable young people.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy Manager informed that locally, post 16 participation rates were good with some 93.5% (as at August 2018) of the 16 and 17 year old cohort (7,134 young people) participating in some form of employment, education and training (EET). The proportions of Wirral young people not in employment, education and/or training (NEET) had been maintained at a low level for the last 4 years. The local authority NEET national indicator (mean NEET for December, January and February 2018), published March 2018, detailed the average NEET to be 3.2 percent and Not Known 1.7 percent. Against the same indicator the Northwest NEET average was 3.4 percent and 3.1 percent Not Known.

The Committee considered an analysis of Client Caseload Information Suite (CCIS) data (August 2018) which illustrated the proportions of young people that accessed the key types of local post 16 education and training provision. It also had regard to a diagram which illustrated, in general terms, how the current mainstream Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency post 16 provision met the needs of young people locally. The diagram illustrated that the highest attaining young people at age 16 generally progressed into schools sixth form provision at a grammar school. Moving down the attainment continuum provision was offered at the sixth form college and other secondary schools.

It was reported that the majority of young people choosing vocational options do so at Wirral Metropolitan College where the specialist facilities and resources existed. Some schools, through their sixth form offer, were also offering increasing volumes of vocationally related qualifications. Those more vulnerable young people with a lower level of academic achievement would access first steps provision at an independent learning provider as a stepping stone to further education and/or training. GCSE maths and english were key components of all study programmes, particularly for those young people that had not achieved a grade 4 or above.

Members asked the Lifelong Learning Strategy Manager a number of questions which were answered accordingly. Matters discussed included the following:

- The number of young people who were employed in education or training should be celebrated and everyone involved in helping to reduce the number of people in NEET were to be congratulated.
- The Sale Sharks Community Trust Project tackled youth unemployment and sought to boost job prospects for 16 to 18 year olds. There had been one cohort so far and it was delivered at the Hive

in a secure supportive environment. It was for those predominantly 17 year olds who had certain vulnerabilities or were vocationally undecided. It plugged a gap and gave young people the confidence to make that next step. Young people who accessed this were from right across the Borough and often were from the “hotspots” areas of Birkenhead, Seacombe, Tranmere and Rockferry.

- Schools with smaller sixth forms had less success. An independent review of sixth form provision had been conducted approximately two years ago. It was fed back through WASH and the outcome was that in schools with small sixth forms there was a correlation in terms of young people’s attainment in those schools. The challenge was to work with Headteachers to shift that provision but there was not a willingness among Headteachers to lose their sixth form provision. The recommendation of the consultant was that if that was the scenario it should be left to the market to shape that type of provision.
- The Service would continue to prioritise the ‘Ways to Work’ supported employment grants (European Social Fund monies) for young people aged 16 to 21 currently not in employment, education and/or training. There had been an extension of European funding granted by DWP and in terms of funding Officers were working with Officers in the Combined Authority on an extension to the programme. Post 2020 Officers were working with the Combined Authority on an extension to the programme. There were some underspends in the London Boroughs that Officers were trying to access and the underspends linked back to the Youth Employment initiative and they hoped to combine that with the extension which the DWP were granting the Council around European funding to create a new programme which would come under strand 1.3. This would take the Service up to March 2022. Officers were also looking at professional careers information advice and guidance which was also funded under the European programme at the moment and that would also be extended hopefully to 2022.
- There was a lean and well connected team who go out and work almost on a pastoral basis both with employers and with the young people who provide intermediary that enables and cajoles employees to give first, second, third and fourth chances. There was a whole series of different barriers that some of these vulnerable young people were faced with. The Team worked with Social care colleagues to support these young people moving forward. These young people would start to develop their talents, routines and employability skills and employers could knock any rough edges off. This was a sustained opportunity for these young people.
- Officers were trying to ensure that the Council’s contractors offered ring fenced opportunities to care leavers.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the following actions taken to support young people be noted:**
 - (a) Children's Services (14-19 Team) and the Strategic Commissioning team will continue to develop and pursue new innovative approaches to leaver social value from the Council's contractors and service providers. Social value in this context involves offering 'ring fenced' employment opportunities to vulnerable young people currently not in employment, education and/or training (NEET). A model has been established, tested and trialled with BIFFA and Continental Landscaping.**
 - (b) Ensure that Wirral Growth Company and Wirral Waters developments prioritise opportunities for Wirral young people. Children's Services (14-19 Team) will be represented at planning meetings with MUSE Developments alongside Wirral Metropolitan College. The Council's 14-19 Team will identify the NEET young people and make referrals as appropriate. Detailed planning dialogue regarding opportunities for young people commenced in January 2019.**
 - (c) The Council will produce and publish a local skills strategy, led by the Place and Investment team that clearly identifies local growth, replacement employment sectors and the skills and attributes key to a prosperous local economy. The education sector (particularly schools) need to understand local employer plans regarding workforce succession planning and future industry skills needs. Greater intelligence in this area will help educators support meeting the demand for skills from local employers.**
 - (d) Providing quality careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to compulsory school age children is key to raising aspirations and supporting robust careers decision making. Delivery of careers education is the statutory responsibility of schools and academies. The Council's 14-19 Service will continue to resource, support and challenge schools to shape and inform their CEIAG programme offer but also scrutinise existing practice.**
 - (e) Continue to prioritise the 'Ways to Work' supported employment grants (European Social Fund monies) for young people aged 16 to 21 currently not in employment, education and / or training. The grant can provide a real opportunity for the most vulnerable young people of the Borough for whom local employers might**

not ordinarily take a chance on. The programme has proved that, with the right support, employment can be sustained beyond the grant phase and young people can have a happy and prosperous future. Of the 168 participants between June 2016 and July 2018, 64 percent were sustained in employment beyond grant funding. The grant will be in place until March 2020.

(2) a copy of the NEET map be sent to all Members of the Committee.

35 IMPROVING LIFE CHANCES STRATEGY

The Director for Strategy and Partnerships presented a report which provided the Committee with an update on the progress being made around tackling child poverty since the last update in March 2018. The report informed that the Improving Life Chances (ILC) Steering Group had worked actively on delivery of the strategy from 2015-2017. The Group had evaluated the causes and impact of poverty, and the work underway through other pledge areas and had agreed a focus on targeted action in geographical areas. Targeted 'pilots' had been established in St James, Seacombe and Beechwood wards and a range of initiatives had been put in place working directly with local groups. Members noted that the pilots had been completed in March 2018. However, the work in those areas was continuing and was linked to the Wirral Together model through the Community Services Pledge.

The Director also reported that in late 2017 the Wirral Partnership had agreed that having a separate Strategy Group meant that action to tackle poverty was not embedded throughout the other themes and, therefore, did not get the visibility required to ensure the right targeted action. An annual "Improving Life Chances" event was now being held once a year and 'champions' from this pledge attended other key Wirral Plan 2020 steering groups to ensure that reducing child and family poverty was a priority across the plan; champions could hold other pledge leads to account. From 2018-19 key measures were being transferred to other pledge reports alongside relevant ongoing activities.

Members asked the Director for Strategy and Partnerships a number of questions which were answered accordingly. Matters discussed included the following:

- Families in Birkenhead were struggling with financial hardship. There was a greater number than what there had been a few years ago and the data provided in the report was not matching this experience. It was agreed that things needed to be got right before birth if life chances were to be improved. The percentage of women booked to access professional maternity services on or before 12+6 weeks gestation had fallen to 78% in the last quarter which was lower than at the start of the Wirral Plan when it had been 80.8%. The target was for

only 90% and that meant there was 10% of woman who were pregnant who did not have access to maternity services before their first few weeks of pregnancy which was a dangerous situation to be in. Members asked if there was a poverty indicator that balanced out income and outgoings. Some people had a high level of debt and debt management services were difficult to access. There was agreement that the data provided gave Members some indication of improvement but it did not show what really was going on and Members wanted to see a set of indicators which better reflected the lives of people that were in the very difficult situation that so many families in Birkenhead were actually in.

- Members queried the number of reports of anti-social behaviour that were detailed in the report and asked if the figures were up to date and accurate. The report informed that anti-social behaviour continued to reduce. The annual figure at the start of the Wirral Plan had been 11837 reports of anti-social behaviour in Wirral and at the end of year 2017/18 it was 8617, a 37.4% reduction. Members did not consider that this reflected what was happening around the Borough. The Director agreed to check the figures and informed that overall there had been a reduction in the number of reports about anti-social behaviour but that did not mean that there were not pockets of anti-social behaviour in the Borough that still needed to be addressed, so overall there was an average reduction where there has been targeted action. This was picked up from Police data and that of others. It did not mean that every aspect of anti-social behaviour had been addressed. There may be some areas in Wirral that need to be targeted and focused upon.
- Attention was drawn to the increase in anti-social behaviour in Hoylake, Meols and West Kirby. This was quite noticeable and Members queried whether the strategy was pushing it around the Wirral to places where the reporting was a bit slower and if that had been reflected in the figures.
- Members asked if the definitions of poverty being used were those of the Rowntree Foundation and were informed that they were the definitions that were used nationally. They were kept consistent because of the need to compare like with like. It related to families who lived below average income. It was usually measured as 60% below average income.
- Group Spokespersons agreed to include a proposal to have a Joint Workshop on poverty and the work that goes on in respect of it included in the agenda for the next agenda setting meeting.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be noted; and

(2) the Director for Strategy and Partnerships be requested to circulate the formal definition of poverty along with updated anti-social

behaviour figures provided by the Police to all Members of the Committee.

36 **LOCAL ACTION TO TACKLE OBESITY**

The Acting Director for Health and Wellbeing presented a report in response to the request from Members for an update on each of the following action to tackle increasing rates of obesity within Wirral:

- Local obesity statistics (with the inclusion of data on diabetes prevalence).
- 'Eat Well Wirral' programme.
- Takeaway licensing.

The Acting Director reported that this work was a key strand of the Wirral 2020 Plan Pledge 'Wirral Residents Live Healthier Lives' and sat within a much broader set of actions designed to tackle obesity. She informed that action to reduce levels of obesity needed to take a system-wide approach incorporating the following:

Planning; transport; housing; environment; behaviour-change; and social and health care systems.

Members noted that further work was required to develop a system wide response and that action on reducing childhood obesity would provide the focus of a report to the Committee in February 2019.

Members asked the Acting Director for Health and Wellbeing and a Planning Officer who was working on policies for the Local Plan to which planning applications would be determined (Eddie Fleming) a number of questions which were answered accordingly. Matters discussed included the following:

- Reference was made to a school on the Wirral where most of the children had a take-away on a daily basis and that was despite the fact that the majority of the children in the school were also on free school meals. There was a real dilemma here about education and meeting nutritional needs. It was proposed that consideration be given to how this awareness of poor quality could be tackled.
- In parts of the Borough there were numerous take-away restaurants grouped together. It was noted that to produce a planning policy and supplementary planning guidance there had to be an evidence-base and it had to be subject to statutory procedures before the Council could introduce it. Planning Officers were working with colleagues in Public Health and Environmental Health. They had a copy of the report and were looking at the best way to include it in an evidence base as the intention was to strengthen one of the draft policies in the Local Plan so that it could control the number of take-away restaurants in

areas and particularly where there were schools. Recommendations would be made to the Cabinet and then the Council's approval would be sought before it went out to public consultation. When all of the comments were received they would be inspected by the Secretary of State's Planning Inspector and if the evidence was shown to be robust enough to defend a policy that restricted takeaways around schools or anywhere else that the Council deemed fit. That would become an adopted policy that would have to be adhered to when determining planning applications. The aim was to produce a draft Local Plan with Supplementary Planning documents for consideration by the Council in July 2019.

- Members wanted to know what needed to be done to ensure that there were not loads of very poor eateries close to each other that were destroying children's lives.
- The report referred to 80% of obese children in Wirral who would become obese adults. The Government did not set any direction so the Council should and it needed to know how to do it.
- Reference was made to the 'Eat Well Wirral' programme referred to in the report and the way foods that could go on sale could be tackled. However, the problem was that Planning did not have any control over existing take-away restaurants. Planning could only control planning applications for new development. The best thing that could be done to support a planning policy was robust evidence that was traceable and could be monitored. If there was an appeal against a decision to refuse planning permission, a Planning Inspector would make the determination and robust evidence would need to be available to support the policy whether it be a Local Plan or through supplementary planning documents to support the Local Plan.
- Members wanted to know what the results of the 'Eat Well Wirral' programme were to date.
- A system wide approach was required and planning was a part of this but it was about working through the Wirral Together approach and working with communities to understand how they could be helped to have a better relationship with food e.g. How to make the most of allotments in the local areas, Children's Centres, Cookery Classes and what Health Visitors were doing with new mums etc. There were a lot of things that could be done, that were community based, so that people could have a better relationship with food.

RESOLVED:

That the actions taken to tackle growing trends in obesity as outlined in the report be noted.

REALITY CHECK VISIT FEEDBACK REPORT

The Chair introduced a report which reminded the Committee of its agreed principle of undertaking a series of Reality Check visits by small groups of Members to enable Members to engage directly with frontline staff. Reality visits and subsequent recommendations would enable the Committee to complete part of its Work Programme.

The Committee was aware that key to the success of scrutiny was the ability of Members to check evidence from a variety of sources. Whilst Members routinely received reports from senior management and had access to performance monitoring reports, it had been proposed that greater access to frontline staff and service users would enable them to triangulate evidence with other sources and give them greater confidence in the outcomes of their scrutiny work. Therefore, it had been agreed to establish a programme of Reality Check Visits through which Members could engage independently and directly with frontline staff. The key operating principles for the visits were detailed in the report.

Appended to the report was a paper that set out the proceedings of the Reality Check Visit to St Catherine's Hospital on 3 December 2019.

The Director of Quality and Patient Safety, Wirral CCG was in attendance at the meeting and discussed the following issues that were raised with Members:

- These visits were really worth doing and Members got a lot out of them. When Members spoke to the staff their Managers/Directors purposely left the room and frank conversations were able to be held.
- Members had been able to tour the building and have a look at the facilities.
- Members were able to meet Doctors and Nurses etc. who were involved in the journey of children who were looked after.
- The Health Passports had really impressed Members and they considered that they should be given to all Wirral's care leavers.
- There were things that the staff wanted to work with Members on.
- There had been some improvements and there would be more.
- There were shortcomings with the Liquid Logic system.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report and the recommendations therein be noted; and**
- (2) the Director of Quality and Patient Safety, Wirral CCG be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.**

38 **2019/2020 BUDGET SCRUTINY WORKSHOP REPORT**

The Chair presented a report by a Scrutiny Officer informing of a Scrutiny Workshop held on 5 December 2019 when Members had considered the 2019/20 budget proposals being put forward in respect of its remit. Attached to the report was a further report that detailed the proceedings of the Workshop.

The Workshop had provided Members with the opportunity to examine in greater detail a number of budget proposals. The budget proposals selected for further examination had been identified by the Chair and Group Spokespersons as those deemed to be of greatest significance in terms of value and the public interest. The report summarised the proposals scrutinised and the comments and suggestions of those Members who had been in attendance at the Workshop.

Those Members who had attended the Workshop were in agreement that the proposed budget savings options were measured and achievable. They had also agreed that the £20m invested last year had stabilised services and the focus was now on investing in the longer term and reducing this figure.

Members had also agreed that they wanted to look closer at the cost of placements for looked after children, and it had been proposed that this be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report on the Workshop (Appendix 1 to the report) be agreed as the Committee's formal response to the 2019/20 budget proposals; and**
- (2) the report and its appendix be referred to the Cabinet for consideration at the time when it is making recommendations to the Council in respect of the Council's Budget for 2019/20.**

39 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT**

The Chair introduced his report advising that this Committee, in co-operation with the other three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual Scrutiny Work Programme. The Work Programme should 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.

The report provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the Municipal Year. Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was a report on a Mental Health Workshop that Members had attended on 11 October 2018. The Work Programme was attached as Appendix 2 to the report, based on issues which were of interest to members of the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee in the municipal year 2018/19.

The Chair reported that there was a multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangement Workshop scheduled for 28 January 2019. Members had received information about it and they would explore the arrangements that could be put in place after the Safeguarding Children Board stood down. The Chair considered it very important that as many Committee Members as possible were in attendance at this meeting to help ensure appropriate scrutiny in respect of the new arrangements.

The Chair also reported that after receiving one of the Ofsted monitoring letters it had been decided to focus the next few reality checks on the Council's partners. The next reality check had not yet been confirmed but hopefully Superintendent Ian Hassall would be in attendance to explore the Police's safeguarding role.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the content of the report be noted; and**
- (2) the proposed Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2018/19 be approved.**