

# CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 17 March 2020

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	W Clements (Chair)	
	Councillors	P Stuart KJ Williams J Johnson I Lewis	A Wright C Carubia C Cooke
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	K Cannon Y Nolan	S Spoor C Povall

## 40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were given and Councillor Jerry Williams asked for his comment, that it was a disgrace to be asked to attend, to be recorded.

## 41 MINUTES

Approval of the minutes was deferred until the first meeting of the Children, Educational and Young People Committee.

## 42 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary and / or any other relevant interest in connection with any matters to be determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

Councillor Paul Stuart declared a personal interest in item 9 (Minute 48, Youth Offending/children in custody) as he had a role as an 'appropriate adult' involved in youth justice matters.

## 43 2019/20 QUARTERLY FINANCE MONITORING

Members considered the financial monitoring information for the Children Overview & Scrutiny Committee as at quarter 3 2019/20.

Information had been drawn from the relevant sections of the most recent Cabinet revenue and capital monitoring reports and had been combined with

additional relevant service information to produce a bespoke report for this Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The report included:

- Performance against the revenue budget (including savings).
- Performance against the capital budget.

**Resolved –**

**That the report be noted.**

#### 44 **Q3 QUARTERLY WIRRAL PLAN PERFORMANCE**

Members considered a report that provided an overview of the progress in Quarter 3 (October December 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

In March 2020 the plan would be completed and the final closedown report summarising the impact on outcomes for residents through the delivery of the plan would be reported through the new Council Governance arrangements to commence in May 2020.

**Resolved -**

**the content of the report be noted.**

#### 45 **DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE**

The Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention presented the report which provided an update on activity to improve the provision of support to children, adults and families affected by domestic abuse. The report considered progress at both strategic and operational levels.

Members noted that a planned stakeholder event scheduled for April was to be delayed by at least a month due to the coronavirus epidemic, and alternative ways of gathering data were being considered. Members also noted that when people were made to remain at home to prevent infection, domestic abuse was a potential risk, as were financial pressure caused by not working.

**Resolved - That**

- (1) the progress made since November 2019 to improve services for children, adults and families affected by domestic abuse be noted.**
- (2) the extension of the timescales previously proposed to launch a new borough-wide partnership strategy for domestic abuse be supported in order to enable meaningful co-production to take place (extending from April 2020 to September 2020).**
- (3) it be noted that co-production of the partnership strategy will delay timescales for reviewing commissioning arrangements and developing a detailed training programme. Activity to improve services will continue throughout and be reported on a regular basis.**

**46 EARLY HELP STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention presented this report which provided an update on the partnership Early Help Strategy 2019-21. It detailed progress made to date, impact of activity, quality assurance arrangements and next steps. The Council was required to have such a strategy and worked with Stockport Council as an improvement partner.

The Early Help Strategy was aligned to the Wirral Plan 2025 objective:

- Brighter Futures: Working for brighter futures for our children, young people and families by breaking the cycle of poor outcomes and raising the aspirations of every child in Wirral.

**Resolved -**

**That the report be noted.**

**47 CHILDREN'S PLACEMENT MARKET**

The Deputy Director for Children presented this report which provided an update on the work within the local authority and across the city region regarding the local placement market for looked after children. The actions were to reduce costs and to ensure the quality and sustainability of placements for children. The report noted the rise in demand and costs and the issues of quality and profiteering which diverted resources that could be used more effectively. The report provided a range of options to help move the market in a different direction, such as increasing in-house arrangements; co-operating with Liverpool City Region for contracts; looking at social enterprise with small business providers; and increasing the fostering base.

Members queried aspects of the policy, which drew out information including:

- That there were investors willing to offer financial help with property renovations
- That use of the term 'children's homes' was not welcomed by the children involved
- The work in Liverpool City Region around supply of care had become an exemplar of best practice nationwide

**Resolved - That**

- (1) **the report be noted.**
- (2) **the work to support improvements in children's placement market be endorsed.**

48 **YOUTH OFFENDING/CHILDREN IN CUSTODY**

Members considered an overview report of the Wirral Youth Justice Service detailing the current performance and services provided. The Youth Justice Strategic Plan aimed to contribute to the wider Corporate and Directorate objectives by providing an efficient service that prevented and diverted young people away from criminal justice, intervened effectively to prevent re-offending and reduced the use of custody for young people.

The Youth Strategic Justice Plan is recognized within the Wirral Council Plan as key to the delivery of the following pledges:

- Young people are ready for work and adulthood.
- Vulnerable children reach their full potential.
- Wirral's Neighborhoods are safe.

Members questions drew out details including:

- If children were held for more than 12 hours, there were foster carers available who can take them unless there was a significant risk
- Custody rates were decreasing over time
- Work was undertaken to tackle reoffending

**Resolved –**

**That the report be noted.**

49 **HEALTHY WEIGHT - MEMBERS REVIEW**

The Director for Health and Wellbeing introduced this report. In early 2019, the Committee received several reports and presentations regarding childhood obesity in Wirral, and a copy of a Health Weight Declaration. As a result, the Committee agreed to;

- Establish a working group to run a series of workshops with the aim of developing an action plan to identify key areas of work to support local people maintain a healthy weight.
- Note the opportunities identified within this report to promote healthy weight.
- Consider implementing a Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight for Wirral

Members noted that their successor Committee would need to continue the work and implement the recommendations.

**Resolved – That**

- (1) **the report be noted**
- (2) **the suggested recommendations be approved and**
- (3) **the report be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration.**

50 **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in co-operation with the other three Overview & Scrutiny Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual scrutiny work programme. This was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, and be formed from a combination of scrutiny reviews, standing items and requested officer reports.

This report provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

**Resolved – That**

**the proposed Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2019/20 be approved.**