

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 23 November 2021

Present: Councillor W Clements (Chair)

Councillors	K Cannon	H Collinson
	C Cooke	C Povall
	C Carubia	P Stuart
	M Booth	A Wright
	D Brennan	AER Jones (In place of S Frost)

48 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed Members, Officers and members of the public to the meeting.

49 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Samantha Frost.

50 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and, if so, declare and state what they were.

No declarations were made.

51 MINUTES

Resolved – That the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2021 be agreed.

52 PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS

The Chair informed the Committee that a public question had been received from a member of the public who had asked that their question be read out at the meeting.

The question was in relation the Kingsway Academy PFI contract, seeking information on how much additional funding the Council would commit to

making the Kingsway Academy site fit for purpose for any future use and where the funding would come from.

The Director of Children, Families and Education responded to outline that as part of the feasibility study for the site, an assessment would be made of any alterations that would need to be made to allow the building to be used by anyone that moved onto the site, and the costs of those alterations would be articulated as part of the business case.

53 **EARLY HELP ALLIANCE REPORT TO AWARD**

The Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which sought agreement from the Children, Young People and Education Committee to award and conclude a commission for early help services for children and families, which sought to deliver a variety of supportive experiences which would help Wirral families to thrive.

It was reported to the Committee that the new model would build upon the successes of the Community Matters programme which it would replace, with extensive co-production having taken place with service users and third sector partners to ensure the model was what service users felt was an effective and sustainable early help model. Innovations of the new approach included it being referral free with families making own choices use of self-assessments alongside reductions in waiting lists through the use of online tools.

Clarification was sought on the funding allocation, where it was reported that the initial funding envelope was £0.675m per annum for 5 years but that a further commission had been added into the programme to make it £0.705m.

Resolved – That

- (1) delegated authority be given to the Director of Children’s Services to award the tender to the successful group of bidders following conclusion of the tender process up to a value of £705,000 per annum for 5 years (a total contract value of £3,525,000) with the option to extend for a further 2 periods of 2 years each.**
- (2) delegated authority be given to the Director of Law and Governance to negotiate and conclude the contract for the new service in consultation with the Director of Children’s Services.**

54 **BUDGET WORKSHOP UPDATE**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which detailed the feedback and outcomes

on the budget workshops that had been help in recent months to consider and comment on different budget options.

Resolved – That the Budget Workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed in appendix 1, be reported to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

55 **BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 2 REPORT**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which set out the financial monitoring information for the Children, Young People & Education Committee as at quarter 2 (June – Sep) of 2021/22, with an overview of budget performance to enable Committee to take ownership of their specific budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

It was reported that there was a forecast year-end revenue position of £0.739m favourable and further detail was provided of the position within the individual budgets. This included favourable revenue positions in Children and Families and Early Help and Prevention due to decreased care costs associated with Children Looked After and the use of grant funding in early years. Within the schools budget it was highlighted that there was a forecast adverse variance in the high needs block, mainly due to the increase in demand and complexity of cases alongside an increase in requests for Education, Health and Care Plan assessments.

A request made during consideration of the quarter 1 report was flagged, which was to receive information on the year-to-date actual position against the year-to-date budget to provide further assurance that the outturn forecast was accurate. In response it was highlighted that the format of reporting was derived from Policy and Resources Committee and used for all Policy and Services Committees. It was requested that the issue be raised with Policy and Resources Committee.

Resolved – That

- (1) the forecast year-end revenue position of £0.739m favourable as reported at quarter 2 (Apr – Sept) of 2021/22 be noted.**
- (2) the progress on the achievement of approved savings and the year-end forecast position at quarter 2 (Apr – Sept) of 2021/22 be noted.**
- (3) the reserves allocated to the Committee for future commitments be noted.**

(4) the forecast year-end capital position of as reported at quarter 2 (Apr – Sept) of 2021/2022 be noted.

56 **QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Performance & Improvement Manager introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which provided a summary of progress made to date on the development of a new performance reporting framework for Members of the Children, Young People & Education Committee, with the addition of benchmarking data along with the latest performance information and the further development of Power BI to include interactive reports on Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Education.

Further detail of the performance indicators was provided to the Committee, with demand increasing across social care and early help and prevention and a reduction in the number of children looked after. The timeliness of adoption was raised with the Wirral average taking 912 days against a national target of 426 days where it was outlined that certain scenarios affected the average timescale such as foster carers keeping children for a long time before adopting, and that officers met with OFSTED on a regular basis to monitor this and were happy that it was a suitable explanation.

The schools basket of data was discussed in detail, where it was reported that increase in eligibility of free school meals was due to Department for Education transitional arrangements as part of the roll out of Universal Credit so that any child eligible in March 2018 would continue to be eligible until 2023 regardless of circumstances, but that a further exercise would be undertaken to understand the impact on schools funding when the Universal Credit funding stopped which would be reported to members. Members discussed the SEND indicators and it was reported that five additional staff had been recruited to assist in applications for Educational Health and Care Plans to try and resolve the backlog.

Resolved – That the content of the Performance Report attached in Appendix A be noted.

57 **PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT**

The Director of Public Health introduced the report which provided the Committee with the independent annual report of the Director of Public Health. The 2020/2021 Report described enduring health inequalities in Wirral, the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these differences in health outcomes and recommended actions that were needed to improve residents' health. The Director of Public Health outlined that the report had been considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board and Adult Social Care

and Public Health Committee and was now being considered by the other Policy and Services Committees as each Committee has a responsibility for functions related to the wider determinants of health.

Members' attention was drawn to the aspects of the annual report relating to children and young people, where the report detailed the important work of the breaking the cycle programme and early help and intervention model, drawing the link between the work of Children's Services and its impact on health and wellbeing. It was acknowledged that the preventative work being undertaken with children and young people would contribute to improved health and wellbeing in the future.

Resolved – That the recommendations detailed within the Public Health Annual Report be endorsed.

58 **KINGSWAY SCHOOL - PFI UPDATE**

The Assistant Chief Executive introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which provided an overview of the options available to explore the future use of the former Kingsway High School, Wallasey. It was reported that the school was part of the Wirral PFI schools' contract that was signed in 2001 and not 2007 as outlined in the report, which allowed for the significant refurbishment and new build of nine schools across the local authority. Kingsway Academy closed in August 2018 and had remained empty since. Options in relation to the school building use had been explored at the end of 2019, of which one of these was the possibility of Clare Mount School moving to The Kingsway School building. Options outlined had not been developed further due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members noted the urgency to find an alternative use of the site given the cost to maintain it empty and urged officers to explore uses such as for 16-19 provision given the projected rising population in the age group. Whilst it was confirmed that whilst the site had to be used for educational provision, it was possible for part of the site to be used for education with other services delivered from other areas. Further information was sought on whether the Published Admission Number for Clare Mount School would increase if the school were to move to the Kingsway site.

Resolved – That

(1) the different options available for the use of The Kingsway Academy site be noted.

(2) a full feasibility assessment of The Kingsway School site including the possibility of moving Clare Mount school into the site be supported.

59 **DOMESTIC ABUSE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which provided an update on the progress made by Wirral's Domestic Abuse Alliance in delivering the Domestic Abuse No Excuse strategy and presented the Annual Report, a narrative from the frontline, on the positive impact the strategy was having.

Members were advised on the detail of the early intervention programme which had received funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver a range of services including the domestic abuse programme. The Chair of the Wirral Domestic Abuse Alliance detailed the work of the alliance which had involved a significant level of coproduction with survivors to produce the Domestic Abuse Strategy, which had brought about a number of positive changes including support for survivors navigating the child protection order process which they had identified as an issue, and the opening of the lighthouse centre for victims of domestic abuse. Further detail was provided on the 'Drive' programme which involved working with perpetrators of domestic abuse, where it was reported that work was ongoing with 51 perpetrators which it was hoped would have a positive impact on 56 associated victims and 108 associated children.

There was endorsement of the work of the Domestic Abuse Alliance from all members. Further information was sought on the investment into trauma enforcement practices in the workforce, where it was outlined that casework was ongoing to better understand those experiencing trauma and the impact it had on their ability to engage with and access services, the outcomes from which the Committee sought feedback on. It was noted that the three newly appointed Domestic Abuse Family Advocates had experience of domestic abuse through mentorship, volunteering or lived experience which provided an important, non-judgemental support for families.

Resolved – That

(1)the progress made by Wirral's Domestic Abuse Alliance in the first of its 5-year strategy be noted and endorsed.

(2)the Domestic Abuse Annual Report be noted and endorsed.

60 **CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE**

The Performance and Improvement Manager introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which provided an update on the work of the Corporate Parenting Board for the previous two years of its activity. The role of the Board was outlined to the Committee which included owning and championing the corporate parenting principles and

holding officers and partners to account for how the principles were applied and delivered, alongside understanding the experiences of children looked after and care leavers and building relationships with young people to ensure they can influence priorities and activity of both the council and its partners.

The Board is responsible for providing oversight and monitoring of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019-2021 which set out a series of priorities focused on improving the lives for children and young people looked after. It was reported that this had resulted in a number of successes, including swim and gym passes for care leavers, improvements in the timeliness and quality of personal education plans and the development of the care leavers hub.

It was moved by Councillor Chris Carubia, seconded by Councillor Wendy Clements, that a presentation be given to all Councillors on what being a corporate parent means. The motion was put and agreed by assent. It was therefore,

Resolved – That

- (1) the report be noted.**
- (2) a further report be presented back to the Committee within one year on the work of the Corporate Parenting Board.**
- (3) a presentation be given to all Councillors on what being a corporate parent means.**

61 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance which provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.