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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 6 December 2022

Present:

Councillor K Hodson (Chair)

Councillors	C Cooke	S Bennett
	C Carubia	E Gleaves
	H Collinson	D Kenny
	C Povall	V Wilson

Apologies

Councillors S Powell Wilde
A Wright
M Jackson
(Diocesan rep)

35 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

36 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Sue Powell Wilde, Councillor Alison Wright and Margaret Jackson .

37 **MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Collinson declared a prejudicial interest in respect of items 6 and 7 by virtue of her involvement with the Unity Federation and membership on Wirral Development Trust.

38 **PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

The Chair reported that there were no public questions, statements, petitions or questions by members.

39 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October be approved as a correct record

40 **CONSULTATION OUTCOME LEASOWE AGE RANGE**

Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in respect of this agenda item, Councillor Collinson left the room during consideration of this matter.

The Principal Officer for School Admissions, Place and Planning introduced the report of the Director of Children, Young People and Education which provided the outcome of a consultation on a proposal to alter the age range of Leasowe Primary School to establish a maintained nursery class and sought approval to alter the age range of the school by one year group from 4 to 11, to 3 to 11.

The report advised that a consultation was held between 5th October 22 and 2nd November 22 and that no objections were received during this period. The report further advised how adopting the proposal would mean that all three primary schools within the identified planning area would offer on-site nursery provision. The report also identified and explained the benefits of operating a nursery class as part of the school and advised members that additional costs could be met from the existing budget of Leasowe Primary School.

In response to a question by a Member it was explained how at present the school had temporarily opened up an F1 (pre school) class in order to meet demand and it was further explained how the uptake of 3 year old provision in this planning area was reported to be lower than other parts of Wirral. Members were assured that ongoing work is being undertaken with Council Education Officers and Early Years Providers in order to address disparity in take up of 3 year old placements.

A member sought reassurance that the consultation had been carried out effectively and legally and was assured that it had been.

Resolved – That

(1) the proposal to alter the age range of Leasowe Primary School by one year group from 4 to 11, to 3 to 11, as a prescribed alteration to a maintained school be approved; and

(2) the Director of Children, Families and Education be granted all necessary authority to implement the proposal.

41 **CONSULTATION OUTCOME OBSERVATORY SCHOOL**

Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in respect of this agenda item, Councillor Collinson left the room during consideration of this matter.

The Principal Officer for School Admissions, Place and Planning introduced the report of the Director of Children, Family and Education which provided the outcome of a consultation on proposals for prescribed alterations to The Observatory School. The report advised how The Observatory School is a mixed age 11 to 16 community special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. It was explained how the proposals listed within the report relate to making permanent a trial scheme providing places to primary school age pupils, increasing the number of places offered by the school and also an expansion onto a satellite site in the Leasowe area.

Members were advised how a public notice setting out the three prescribed alterations was published on 5th October 22 followed by a 4 week representation period to which no objections were received.

In response to a query, members were advised that the Assistant Director for Education would work closely with the school to address provision with regards to staffing. Furthermore with regards to staff moving from site to site, members were advised that the school are working with existing staff regarding any new working arrangements.

On a motion by Councillor Carubia and seconded by Councillor Povall it was:

Resolved – That

- (1) the change to the lower age limit of The Observatory School from 11 to 8 be approved;**
- (2) the permanent change of the number of places at The Observatory School to 100 be approved;**
- (3) the expansion of The Observatory School onto a satellite site be located at the former Leasowe Early Years Centre be approved; and**
- (4) the Director of Children, Families and Education be granted all necessary authority to implement the proposals**

42 **2022-23 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER TWO**

The Senior Business Partner introduced a report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which provided members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2022-23 saving programme and a summary of reserves.

Members were advised how at the end of quarter 2, there was a forecast adverse position of £2.297m on the Committees net revenue budget of £79.234m. Members were further advised how there had been significant movements since the last report, largely due to 3 main issues:

- Forecast increased costs of £1.1m from the employers proposed pay award, over and above the original 3% built into the 2022-23 budget;
- SEND assisted travel contract, with inflation now estimated at over 30%
- Increased numbers of children in care, after a year of reducing numbers, particularly in young people placed in high -cost residential settings.

In response to a question, members were advised how due to the overspend in the high needs (SEND) block, the DfE have arranged for consultants to review what can be improved to become more cost effective. It was explained how in Wirral there is a higher than average proportion of children with SEND who are educated in a specialist setting rather than within a mainstream school. In response to a further question, members heard how the 'Transforming Care' project is projected to create savings when new properties are opened in the new year.

Resolved – That

- (1) the forecast revenue position presented at Quarter 2 be noted;**
- (2) the progress on delivery of the 2022-23 savings programme at Quarter 2 be noted;**
- (3) the forecast level of reserves at Quarter 2 be noted; and**
- (4) the forecast capital position presented at Quarter 2 be noted.**

43 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Performance and Improvement Manager for Children's Services introduced the report of the Director for Children, Young People and Education providing the latest performance information for Children's Services.

Of particular note, members heard how there had been an increase in numbers of looked after children in this quarter and the numbers of children adopted within this quarter had decreased. They were also informed that there is further work to do around improving health assessment compliance, with particular reference to there having been a significant dental check delay for some children.

Furthermore, in terms of education it was reported that attainment across all ranges had fallen at both national and Wirral level compared to 2019

outcomes and in relation to KS2 outcomes, the gap to national had widened to 7%, compared to the 2019 gap. It was reported how improvements have been made in EHCP timeframes and more children have been benefiting from the age 2 – 3 funding.

A query was raised regarding dental care for children and it was suggested that other options be considered for example the possibility of a community dentist at Arrowe Park.

An increase in domestic violence referrals was noted and a query was raised regarding this. In response, it was explained that the issue is complex and there has been legislative change that has led to the increase. The Assistant Director informed members that there has been ongoing preventative work with both perpetrators and victims.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

44 **UPDATE ON WIRRAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY 2021-2024**

The Assistant Director for Education introduced the report of the Director of Children, Family and Education that provided an update on the Wirral School Improvement Strategy 2021-2024.

Members were reminded that the strategy had been improved in September 2021. Progress to date was set out within the report under five themes; Leadership and Governance, High Support, High Challenge, Self – improving school system, learning and innovation and School Improvement Wirral. Progress was identified alongside each theme.

In response to a question it was reported that Ofsted inspections had been considered when devising the strategy and that 86% of schools in Wirral have received a rating of good or better.

Resolved – That

(1) Progress made to date on delivering the School Improvement Strategy 2021-24 be endorsed; and

(2) the outlined plans to progress the strategy over the next two years be approved.

45 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN REPORT**

The Assistant Director of Education introduced the report of the Director of Children, Family and Education that had been referred to the Children, Young People and Education Committee from the Constitution and Standards Committee following its meeting on 29th September 2022.

The report provided members with an opportunity to review the Ombudsman's report and to agree to monitor the recommendations as part of its role in monitoring the SEND Improvement Programme and 'Wirral Statement of Action'. The report provided an overview into the nature of the complaint and updated the committee on progress on the recommendations. Overall, it was reported that failings had been linked to communication with the young person and family and measures are now in place to address this as detailed within the report.

In response to a question, it was reported that the backlog in EHCP's had improved and an intensive piece of work is being undertaken to ensure that annual reviews are being held.

Resolved – That

(1) progress made to date on the recommendations as outlined be endorsed; and

(2) progress be monitored as part of the committees role in overseeing progress of the Wirral Statement of Action.

46 **BREAKING THE CYCLE**

The Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention presented a report by the Director of Children, Family and Education that provided an update on the Breaking the Cycle programme. Members heard how there would be a further two reports presented to committee providing an overview of learning and impact and will provide direction to workforce remodelling activity. The report provided information on the 8 Breaking the Cycle projects and their impact. Furthermore, the report shared what had been learnt by participants about their experience.

Of particular note, the report advised how during the first year of delivery, Breaking the Cycle catalyst projects have provided co-ordinated support from a lead practitioner that had benefited 2,308 individuals, including 840 adults and 1468 children and young people. An analysis of the cohorts who had accessed support were detailed within the report.

Members provided positive feedback on the programme and offered their full support regarding the progression. Officers were thanked for their hard work and dedication.

Resolved – That

(1) the development of services relating to the break the cycle programme be endorsed; and

(2) a further two learning reports be considered at future committee meetings.

47 **UPDATE ON THE GOVERNMENT WHITE 'OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL; STRONG SCHOOLS WITH GREAT TEACHERS FOR YOUR CHILD'**

The report presented by the Assistant Director of Education presented a report by the Director of Children, Families and Education which provided an update on the content of the Government's White Paper on schools entitled 'Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child'. The report highlighted the key aspects of the white paper and the impact that this could have on the school system. The white paper was appended to the report.

In response to a question, members were advised how one of the key changes should the legislation be enacted would be that all schools will be an academy school by 2030. Members were further advised how a steering group consisting of headteachers of community maintained schools had been established to consider the implications.

A discussion then ensued regarding budgeting for both academies and maintained schools and members were appraised of the arrangements for both and the key difference being that a maintained school can set a deficit budget were as an academy cannot.

Resolved – That the report be noted

48 **FAMILY HUBS**

The Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention introduced a report by the Director of Children, Families and Education that provided an introduction to the Family Hubs programme. It was reported how Family Hubs provide the means by which Wirral Council can optimise a number of existing strategic priorities whilst providing an accessible, relevant and supportive offer to residents

The report advised how a family hub is a system wide model of providing high quality, joined up family support services that are delivered from conception through to the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).

Further details of the initiative were set out in the report and it was explained how each hub should be bespoke to the local community it serves and there are three key delivery principles underpinning the national concept – Access, Connection and Relationships.

Resolved – That

(1) The report be noted; and

(2) a further update report be presented to the Children, Young People and Education Committee in six months

49 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services outlined the report detailing the work programme for the Children, Young People and Education Committee for the municipal year

The Director of Children, Family and Education advised that a report would be presented to committee in March informing of the findings of the ongoing joint targeted inspection that is currently ongoing

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

50 **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL MINUTES 12.10.22**

Resolved – That the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel be noted.