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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 24 January 2023

Present:

Councillor K Hodson (Chair)

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Councillors | H Collinson | S Powell-Wilde |
| | C Cooke | V Wilson |
| | C Carubia | A Wright |
| | C Povall | Jackson |
| | S Bennett | H Gorman (In place of E Gleaves) |
| | D Kenny | |

50 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

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

51 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2022 be approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Paul Stuart in the attendance as a deputy for Councillor Sue Powell-Wilde.

52 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Emily Gleaves.

53 **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 Helen Collinson declared a personal interest as a trustee of Wirral Development Trust which was connected to Leasowe Adventure Playground.

54 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Chair reported that two public questions had been submitted, and in the absence of their attendance the Chair would read out the question.

The first question was from Bobby Jones, outlining the importance of the Little Centre Beechwood and Gautby Road Play Centres to the local community and asking whether they would cutting their budget. The Chair outlined the reluctance to decrease the number of services provided to children but

explained the significant budgetary pressures the Council faced and the challenge to legally set a balanced budget. She advised that no decision had yet been made and that any decision would take account of the feedback from the public consultation Youth Services.

The Chair read out the second question from Nicky Ryan, which asked whether the community agreed how much of a good impact the play schemes had on Wirral children. The Chair outlined that the consultation response demonstrated the importance of play schemes to local communities, but further detailed the Council's budget position and that all savings would need to be considered to decide what could be delivered in the next financial year.

55 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

The Chair reported that four requests had been received to make a statement.

Paul Townley and Jess Thompson made a joint statement in relation to item 7 'Budget Workshop Outcomes', providing the history of the Leasowe Adventure Playground and detailing the activities that take place there. Jess spoke to the Committee as a young person who uses the play centre and outlined the events that she attended and how important it was to her, and urged the Committee to consider its importance to local young people.

Councillor Liz Grey made a statement in relation to item 7 'Budget Workshop Outcomes' and urged the Committee to speak out against cuts to Wirral play schemes, which offered support to families in the most deprived areas, helped the Council meet its Wirral Plan objectives, reduced anti-social behaviour, supported child development and education through play and would be a false economy if savings were made.

Councillor Brian Kenny made a statement in relation to item 7 'Budget Workshop Outcomes' and urged the Committee not consider savings in play schemes in Bidston and St James ward as one of the most deprived wards in the country, and detailed the benefits of play to children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. Councillor Kenny read out statements from local young people and urged the Committee to listen to the local young people.

Councillor Julie McManus made a statement in relation to item 7 'Budget Workshop Outcomes' and detailed the work that local play schemes undertook during school holidays, with over 100 hot meals provided each day during school holidays. Councillor McManus read out a statement on behalf of a local young person which detailed how they valued the local play scheme.

The Chair read out a statement on behalf of Councillor Ian Lewis, which questioned the reality of the potential savings of closing play schemes as corporate costs were apportioned across council services and the identified

saving amount took no account of the revenue raised through attendance or fund raising, and that the centres were in areas prone to anti-social behaviour which would be exacerbated by any closures.

56 **MEMBER'S QUESTIONS**

The Chair reported that no questions had been received from Members.

With the consent of the Committee, the Chair altered the order of business

57 **BUDGET WORKSHOP OUTCOMES**

The Director of Children, Families and Education introduced the report which enabled the Committee to consider feedback and outcomes from the Budget Workshops which had been held in recent months to facilitate discussion on the proposed budget options. The report also provided an update on the 2023/24 budget setting process with details on the most recent budget options, which were developed in response to the previously outlined budget position.

Members acknowledged the level of public support for play schemes and thanked those residents who had spoken at the beginning of the meeting. The Committee debated the Council's overall budgetary position and the level of funding required to operate the schemes. The Chair outlined concerns around discrepancies between users and the Council for the running costs of the schemes and their attendance levels.

On a motion by Councillor Kathy Hodson, seconded by Councillor Vida Wilson, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That

- (1) The Committee would oppose any attempts to close these play centres until adequate evidence on which to base a decision on the level of quality and provision has been provided.**
- (2) The Committee be invited to meet with the play schemes to learn more about their work, the issues they have faced, their relationship with the department and their communities.**
- (3) the Budget Workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed appendices 2 and 3, be reported to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.**
- (4) the latest budget information provided to Policy and Resources Committee in January 2023 be noted.**

58 **The meeting was adjourned at 18:47pm and resumed at 18:55pm
ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY
CONTROLLED PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE CO-
ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES FOR 2024-25**

The Head of School Admissions introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which set out the proposed Council's admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools and the co-ordinated schemes for 2024-2025. The report also provided for approval the Wirral Fair Access Protocol which had been amended to reflect feedback from Wirral schools and the 2021 Fair Access Guidance.

The Committee was advised that there had been no significant changes to the admission arrangements in the body of the schemes, and that the only changes were that Christ Church CE Primary School in Birkenhead had consulted on a reduction in its Published Admission Number (PAN) from 37 to 30 from 2024/2025, and St Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School in Wallasey had consulted on a reduction in PAN from 45 to 30 from 2024/2025. Further detail was given on the changes to the Fair Access Protocol including elective home education, reasonable travelling distance to school and termly sharing of the Fair Access Grid.

In response to a number of queries from members, it was outlined that the Fair Access Panel was made up of three headteachers with a minimum of two in attendance for quoracy with further representation from admissions, the inclusion team, 14-19 services, special educational needs and disability services and the attendance team, and that the outcomes were reported to the schools adjudicator with parents retaining the right to appeal for a school place.

Resolved – That

(1) The admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and the Wirral co-ordinated scheme for 2024/2025 be approved.

(2) The revised Wirral Fair Access Protocol be approved.

59 **SUMMARY OF STANDARDS (UPDATED) – PROVISIONAL OUTCOMES
FOR KEY STAGE 4**

The Assistant Director for Education introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which provided an update on the provisional pupil outcomes for Key Stage 4 children and gave a first indication of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the education of young people in Wirral. It was reported that the locality figures were based on the location of the child,

not the school they attended, and that only children that were both resident and educated within Wirral were captured in the data.

The Committee was advised of the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 figures, with Wirral scoring 48.7 in Attainment 8 which was in line with the national average. The Progress 8 figures were broken down within localities and by selective and non-selective schools. The Committee discussed the figures in detailing noting reductions in Progress 8 in certain areas, and were advised that comparisons to 2019 had to be considered in the context of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Members requested further information regarding comparisons with statistical neighbours.

Resolved – That

(1) the report be noted.

(2) the Service’s planned refresh of the school improvement strategy based on the outcomes outlined be supported.

60 SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2022-2025

The Assistant Director for Children and Families introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which presented an update on the Children’s Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022-25. The strategy set out the Council’s plans developing and supporting the social care workforce over the next three years. It outlined five priorities to attract, retain and support the development of a stable, talented, and committed workforce which has the skills, knowledge and motivation to improve children’s lives. These were:

- Priority 1: ‘Growing our own’ through recruitment and development
- Priority 2: Support Continuous Professional Development to deliver a motivated and skilled workforce, with an emphasis on supporting staff retention
- Priority 3: Develop high performing social work managers that support a performance management framework that reflects ‘high support high challenge’
- Priority 4: Develop new and revised ways of working building on existing strengths to support children, young people and their families
- Priority 5: Communication and change management

Further updates were provided to the Committee with recruitment agencies having supported the recruitment of 7 social workers under a payment by results commitment, with 3 social workers having successfully completed year 1 of the degree apprenticeship and a 2nd cohort launching in January 2023. It was further reported that £250,000 had been received from the Department for Education Innovation Programme to look at developing a not-for-profit

recruitment agency, with the Director of Children, Families and Education leading on that project for the North West.

Members sought further information on a range of issues detailed within the report including the development of a Community Interest Company for recruiting where it was reported that different models had been tried nationally and faced issues with competition from other agencies. The recruitment and retention of social workers was discussed at length and it was queried whether the priorities in the strategy had yet been embedded with the workforce and whether officers thought it would improve retention. In response, members were advised that it was hoped that the new and existing initiatives would improve retention, but highlighted the challenges Wirral faced including neighbouring authorities rated as inadequate and using financial solutions to attract care workers.

Resolved – That the progress made to date on implementing the Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022-2025 be endorsed.

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 review its work across the municipal year.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

62 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

63 **BUDGET WORKSHOP APPENDICES**

Resolved – That the appendices be noted.