

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 19 July 2023

Present: Councillor S Powell-Wilde (Chair)

Councillors P Basnett V Wilson
S Bennett C Cooke
T Laing J Grier
L Luxon-Kewley C Carubia
M Jordan (for K
Hodson)

15 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast and reminded them that a copy of the webcast would be retained on the Council's website for two years.

16 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Kathy Hodson who was substituted by Councillor Mary Jordan. Apologies were also received from Councillor Cherry Povall and Margaret Jackson.

17 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

Councillor Tom Laing declared personal interest on agenda item 7 as a member of the Cooperative Group and a pecuniary interest on agenda item 7 relating to the nature of his employment and stated that he would leave the chamber for this item.

Councillor Paula Basnett and the Chair both declared personal interests as foster carers.

18 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

19 **PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

The Chair noted that no public questions, statements or petitions had been received.

The Chair informed the committee that one Member question had been received.

Councillor Chris Cooke asked a question on the nature of reports being submitted to committee and whether reports such as item 8, 2023-24 Budget Monitoring for Quarter 1 and 11, SEND Dashboard, on the agenda for this meeting which were purely for noting could be omitted in future.

The Chair responded that Policy and Resources Committee are responsible for agreeing the amount of budget allocated to each directorate. Directorates and their committees were then responsible for managing that budget throughout the year. It was agreed that each committee would monitor their in-year position and agree with the directorate what adjustments or reductions in service needed to be made should an overspend be reported. She noted that while budget monitoring reports were not key decisions, they were regarded as highly important in order to that the committee have oversight of the directorate's budgetary position.

Regarding the SEND Dashboard report, the Chair noted that performance reports were normally brought to committee each meeting. She noted that the directorate was in the process of redesigning their agendas to allow the committee to look in more detail at an area of performance.

The data dashboard available at committee would allow elected members to see performance across children's services, health providers, adult services and schools for children with special educational needs. The opportunity to challenge children's services and other providers based on detailed evidence of provision would complement the other information being provided in the SEND reports that are coming to committee and allow elected members a detailed look into a very challenging area of our work. The SEND dashboard that was presented was not the dataset that elected members normally receive, it is the dataset that the DfE are using and OFSTED will use to manage our overall performance.

20 **ACCEPTANCE OF LIFELONG LEARNING SERVICE 2023/24 ACADEMIC YEAR GRANT FUNDING**

The Head of Service, Integrated Learning, Skills and Employment introduced the report of the Director of Children, Family and Education. The report sought the authority to accept the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) funding of £1,322,591.37 awarded to the Council under the Adult Education Budget for the academic year 2023/24. The request included the

discrete funding to deliver the Department for Education (DfE) Multiply Programme.

Resolved – That

- 1. The Director of Children Family and Education be authorised to accept grant funding for the 2023/24 academic year from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in the sum of £1,135,646 for the purposes set out at paragraph 3.4 of this report; and**
- 2. The Director of Law and Governance be authorised to enter into any necessary agreements or other legal documentation to implement the above recommendations.**

21 COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER - HIGHER BEBINGTON LIBRARY

The Assistant Director, Special Projects, introduced the report of the Director of Finance. The report sought approval of the Heads of Terms to transfer this asset to the COOP Academy (Bebington) for education.

Members thanked the Assistant Director, Special Projects for the report and noted the good outcome for the building.

Resolved – That the transfer of the former Higher Bebington library to COOP Academy (Bebington) on the Heads of Terms in Appendix 1 of this report, subject to the consent of Unilever, be approved.

22 2023-24 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER ONE

The Director of Children, Family and Education introduced her report. The report set out the financial monitoring information, revenue, and capital position, for the Children, Families and Education Committee as at Quarter 1 (30 June) of 2023/24. The report provides Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023-24 saving programme and a summary of reserves to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

Members queried the favourable variance of £1.1 million in section 3.5 of the report and asked if this figure would reduce over time due to staff members moving up their pay scale. They were informed that this variance was based on an average across the council and noted that while staff would move up their pay scales over time, there would also be a similar level of new starters over the same time. Further work was to be undertaken to ensure the accuracy of this information.

Members queried whether all members of the Committee could attend budget workshops. The Chair agreed that a budget workshop for all members of the Committee would be welcome. Members also queried what was being done to mitigate overspends in the directorate. They were informed that various savings via changes to services and future opportunities were constantly being investigated.

Members asked if there were enough registered foster carers to cover demand and how numbers could be increased. They were informed that the service would always want to increase the number of foster carers as they can make a huge difference to a child's life. The service was always encouraging more people to come forward and were confident that they could sell the virtues of fostering to more people.

Resolved - That

- 1. The forecast revenue position presented at Quarter 1 be noted;**
- 2. The proposed allocation of additional £0.800m funding from the increased council budget of £2.000m, subject to council approval be noted;**
- 3. The progress on delivery of the 2023-24 savings programme be noted;**
- 4. The forecast level of reserves at Quarter 1 be noted; and**
- 5. The capital position at the end of Quarter 1 be noted.**

23 BREAKING THE CYCLE

The Assistant Director Early Help and Prevention introduced the report of the Director of Children, Family and Education. The report provided the Committee with the second of three reports on the Breaking the Cycle programme, focused on change for professionals and services. The Breaking the Cycle programme is a key strand of the early help and prevention approach, informing long-term system change and contributing to demand reduction for acute services. As the first programme to launch following the Council adopting the Prevention Policy and Prevention Framework in October 2021, the series of reports would provide an overview of learning, impact and provide direction to workforce remodelling activity.

Members gave praise for the programme and stated that they looked forward to seeing it rolled out across the borough. They queried the role of the charity Right to Succeed and were informed that they provided the backbone of support for the programme, undertaking research and providing data. It was noted that without their work the programme would not have worked.

The Assistant Director Early Help and Prevention offered to arrange a workshop for Members which the Chair confirmed would be appreciated.

Resolved – That a further findings report be agreed to be brought to the Committee from the Breaking the Cycle programme.

24 **SEND TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Assistant Director Early Help and Prevention introduced the report of the Director of Children, Family and Education. The report provided members with an update on progress of the SEND Transformation Programme. In September 2021, the local area's services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, SEND, was inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, CQC. As a result of the inspection, the local area was required to submit a Written Statement of Action, WSoA to address the ten areas of improvement which had been identified. This was approved by Ofsted on behalf of the CQC on 28th March 2022.

The SEND Transformation Board had overseen WSoA activity since April 2022, with monitoring provided by the Department for Education and NHS England. In June 2022, a series of 'deep dive' workshops took place with each of the six workstreams to evaluate progress and develop a current self-assessment.

Members noted that more places were going to be required for children with special educational needs and asked if there was a timetable for alternative premises. They were informed that there was a long-term strategy being developed for 2023-2028. It was noted that since 2020-2021 an additional 350 places had been added using funding from the DfE. Further information would be brought to the Committee as the position was made clearer.

Members queried what a Care Navigator was and were informed that the role was there to help parents navigate through the Educational and Health Care Plan (EHCP) process as a single point of contact to keep them informed of their progress.

Members had further questions on the EHCP process and officers suggested that a workshop explaining this in further detail would be beneficial. The Chair agreed and requested that a workshop be arranged.

Resolved – That the findings of the position statement be noted and that a further monitoring report be brought to Committee at a future date.

25 SEND DASHBOARD

The Assistant Director Early Help and Prevention introduced the report of the Director of Children, Family and Education. The report explained that the Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Dashboard was prepared quarterly and contained the latest performance information from the Local Authority and Health organisations. The SEND Dashboard could be found in Appendix A and related to Quarter 4 2022/23 (period ending March 23).

Members noted that some of the statistics were confusing that national and internal benchmarks were not clear. Officers accepted this, noting that internal benchmarks were usually set to mirror national averages where Wirral were underperforming but that some internal benchmarks could be more aspirational than national averages.

Members queried the wait times for speech and language therapy and whether the needs of children being educated from home were being picked up. Officers explained that there was a high demand for speech and language therapists and while a lot of the support did not need to be provided by a speech and language therapist, it was frequently requested by parents that their child be supported by one. It was noted that there was a mixed picture for children being home educated being put through the EHCP process and it depended on when the child's needs were picked up. If the child had not been registered in the school system and parents did not seek support then the service could not offer support.

Members asked about missing information within the dashboard and were informed that a system had been upgraded and there had been a corruption of data in the migration to the new system. The service was currently waiting on the verification of the data before it was published.

Resolved – That the content of the SEND Dashboard attached in Appendix A. be noted.

26 THE GRADUATED APPROACH

The Assistant Director of Education introduced the report of the Director of Children, Family and Education. The report provided Members with an overview of the new Graduated Approach and associated toolkit. The report noted that in September 2021, the local area's services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities was inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. As a result of the inspection, the local area was required to submit a Written Statement of Action to address the ten areas of improvement which had been identified. This was approved by Ofsted on behalf of the CQC on 28th March 2022. The Assistant Director of

Education gave a demonstration of the Graduated Approach to the committee.

Members asked whether a child waiting for an ASD diagnosis could still receive support without a diagnosis. They were informed that they could, with the school being able to choose to pursue support based on their evidence.

Members queried whether the Graduated Approach would alleviate inconsistencies in how children were offered support by offering a standardised approach. Officers responded that this was the intention with training being offered to all schools over the next academic year. All schools would be inspected by OFSTED and they would speak to Wirral on oversight. There was an expectation that all schools including academies would follow this approach as it was in their interest to evidence what the needs of their pupils were.

Members asked if parents homeschooling their children would have access to this information and were informed that it was publicly available and that a streamlined version was planned in future for that purpose.

The Chair thanked officers for their work and looked forward to seeing it rolled out.

Resolved – That the content of the report be noted.

27 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance which reminded members that the Children, Young People and Housing Committee was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were the remit of the Committee.

Members requested a workshop on Edsential and an update on The Hive to be added to the work programme.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

28 **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 item of business on the grounds that it involved 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 had been applied and favoured exclusion.

