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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 25 September 2023

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Powell-Wilde (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Bennett T Laing L Luxon-Kewley K Hodson	V Wilson C Cooke J Grier C Carubia
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	K Stuart M Jordan	
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	P Bassnett C Povall	

30 **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.

31 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Paula Bassnett who was substituted by Councillor Kaitlin Stuart. Apologies were also received from Councillor Cherry Povall who was substituted by Councillor Mary Jordan. Apologies were received from Independent Person, Margaret Jackson.

32 **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.

The Chair declared a personal interest as a foster carer.

33 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023 and the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting held on 19 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

34 **PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

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

35 **WIRRAL YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE ANNUAL PLAN**

The Youth Offending Service Manager introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education. The report provided the Committee with an introduction to the Wirral Youth Justice Service, YJS, Strategic Plan 2023-2024. The Youth Justice Board, YJB, was a non-departmental public body for overseeing the youth justice system in England and Wales. The preparation and submission of an 'Annual Plan' was linked to the terms and conditions of the Youth Justice Board grant award, this award contributed to the funding of youth offending teams and services across England and Wales.

The Chair requested that the Terms of Reference for the Youth Justice Board be shared with the committee so members may consider joining.

Officers explained that it is national practice to show the reoffending rates of two years prior.

The Chair requested further information to be provided externally regarding the breakdown of reoffending figures.

The Chair expressed gratitude to the officers regarding the depth of the work around the bespoke sessions with young offenders. The scheme won the award for inclusion, following its pilot in Wirral, it is now being adopted in other areas.

Resolved – That

- 1. the Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2023-2024 be endorsed and Council be recommended to approve the plan.**
- 2. the approach and ongoing work within the Youth Justice Service and across the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) be noted.**

36 **ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION**

The Wirral Attendance Manager introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education. The report provided members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an overview of Elective Home Education within Wirral.

Members requested categorised information regarding reasons why children have been taken out of mainstream education. Officers advised that given the fact these numbers are small, they must be mindful not identify any children

when sharing such information. Officers did offer to bring a comparative piece of work to members.

On a motion moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, it was -

Resolved – That the development of the Electively Home Education of young people be noted and supported and a further report from the Attendance Service be received.

37 **WIRRAL ATTENDANCE SERVICE**

The Wirral Attendance Manager introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education. The report provided members of the Committee with an overview of School Attendance within Wirral. It was accepted that consistently high school attendance gave children and young people the best opportunity to learn and achieve their potential.

Members recognised the increase in absences due to family holidays during term time. Officers informed members that schools are being supported to challenge parents who report frequent absences.

On a motion by Councillor Chris Carubia, seconded by Councillor Louise Luxon-Kewly, it was

Resolved – That

1. The Committee exercise oversight of the development of the Wirral Attendance Service and agreed to receive a further finding report from the Attendance Service.

2. The Committee exercised oversight of Wirral's school attendance performance.

38 **VIRTUAL SCHOOL WIRRAL OPERATING MODEL**

The Virtual School Head of Service introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education. The report provided members of the Committee with an overview of the Wirral Virtual School and its operating model. The Children and Families Act 2014 required local authorities in England to have a virtual school Head (VSH) who monitored looked after children, previously looked after children and those children with a social worker as if they were in one school, the virtual school. In June 2021, the role of the VSH was extended to include non-statutory responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker as well as looked after children. This role included identifying the local authorities looked after children and those with a social worker, and being the lead responsible officer for ensuring that

arrangements are in place to improve their educational experiences and outcomes. The Virtual School are responsible for managing pupil premium funding for the children they look after and for allocating it to schools and alternative provision (AP) settings. The Virtual School were also responsible for managing the early years pupil premium (EYPP). This would be distributed to early years providers that educated looked-after children who were taking up the free early education entitlement for 3 or 4 year-olds.

A discussion took place regarding funding of the scheme, management of overspends, and how funds were used. It was confirmed an annual report is presented to the Schools Forum for confirmation of funding usage.

In response to a query regarding the practices that are used to retain engagement in education, officers described good practice, such as sharing information on successful performance, sharing strategies across the authority, and highlighting disadvantages through training.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Vida Wilson, it was,

Resolved -That the current operating model and the approach taken to promote the education aspirations of young people with involvement in social care be noted and supported.

39 PUPIL PLACE PLANNING PHASE 2

The Assistant Director of Children, Families and Education introduced the report. The report outlined the recommendations arising out of phase 2 of the pupil place planning review. In March 2021, the Committee endorsed the Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021 -2026. This Strategy set out a planned framework for the review of school places in both primary and secondary mainstream schools over the next 5 years. Phase 2 of the primary phase of the review commenced in October 2022 looking at small planning areas in and around South Wirral, specifically: Bebington, Bromborough, Eastham, Spital and Thornton Hough. A detailed review framework and process had been undertaken and has included information gathering, stakeholder discussion. This had culminated in the recommendations presented within the report. Recommendations relating to schools controlled under the auspices of both the Diocese of Chester – Church of England, and the Diocese of Shrewsbury – Roman Catholic, have been presented, discussed, and approved as well as proposals relating to Academy Trusts. This has demonstrated the strength in partnership working and collaboration across the education sector which would be harnessed as the parties progress as a local education partnership. Fundamental to the work has been adherence to the principles outlined.

Members expressed positive feedback as the scheme avoids the use of greenfield sites, using brownfield sites instead, and avoided the merging of

schools which was closely aligned with the Wirral Plan. When questioned about the status of academies, it was explained that the statutory responsibility remained the same regardless of the type of school.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Judith Grier, it was,

Resolved – That the recommendations made regarding the proposals for each small planning areas of Spital, Thornton Hough, Bebington and Bromborough & Eastham be noted and supported.

40 **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Assistant Director of Children, Families and Education introduced the report. Since March 2010 there was a requirement that the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service within each local authority produce an Annual Report of activity, with regards to children looked after (CLA). The purpose of the IRO Annual Report, which was attached at appendix 1 was to evaluate the extent to which Wirral Council has fulfilled its responsibilities to its Children Looked After for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023. This report provided an overview to the Children Young People and Education Committee for scrutiny and comment.

Officers explained that IROs are registered with Social Work England, and must evidence and demonstrate their continued development. Should an IRO require improvement there are processes in place to review and recover performance.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, it was,

Resolved – That

- 1. The information contained in the IRO Annual Report attached at appendix 1 be reviewed and scrutinised.**
- 2. The publication of the Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report be approved.**

41 **ALTERNATIVE PROVISION**

The head of Inclusion for School Improvement introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families, and Education. The report provided Members with an overview of Wirral Local Authority's requirement to arrange full-time education from and including the sixth day of a permanent exclusion. To allow opportunity to scrutinise this area of work.

Officers explained that this provision is used as an opportunity to return young people to mainstream education. In a response to a query regarding pupil funding, officers explained that any funding attached to a pupil follows said

pupil to each provision. A number of exclusions had been rescinded due to successful interventions and partnership working.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, it was,

Resolved – That the development of Wirral Local Authority’s requirement to arrange full-time education from and including the sixth day of a permanent exclusion be noted and commented on.

42 BUDGET UPDATE REPORT

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education. The report provided an update on the budgets within the remit of the Committee in respect of the in-year position and the anticipated pressures for future years that were being considered within the Medium Term Financial Plan. The Council was required to set a balanced budget each year and set a Medium Term Financial Plan which considers the future pressures and savings options that would be taken forward to result in a balanced budget position. The Council faced a challenging financial outlook due to inflationary and demand pressures alongside the previous significant reductions in Government funding and uncertainty around the future financial settlements. This report provides an update for the Committee on those budget areas within its remit, including any forecast overspends reported in the first quarter and potential pressures in both the current and future years. The Committee was asked to note the report and endorse any proposed actions to mitigate the in-year position.

Councillor Chris Cooke highlighted to Members that at a recent meeting of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee continued support had been given for the payment of the Real Living Wage to Wirral Carers and questioned whether the Children, Young People & Education Committee could make a similar commitment for which he was sure there would be cross party support.

The Legal Officer advised Members that in March 2023 the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee established a two tier payment system to external contractors providing care services with an enhanced payment rate for those contractors who did pay their employees the Real Living Wage. The Legal Officer added that having established this process the projected costs to the Council is included in the Committee’s medium term financial plan and would be considered again in detail during the development of Service budgets for the next financial year.

Officers explained that inclusion of such a commitment would not be appropriate in respect of the current budget monitoring report and that further consideration would have to be given in respect of future budgets.

Members noted the comments of the Officers

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Vida Wilson, it was,

Resolved – That the report for review and scrutiny be noted.

43 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Principal Solicitor introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance. The Children, Young People and Education Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme would align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee. It was envisaged that the work programme will be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Children, Young People and Education Committee was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. Following the whole-Council elections, the newly composed Committee was invited to review the 2023-24 work programme moving into the 2023-24 municipal year. It was proposed that issues on the existing work programme that are for information purposes only can be considered via other means, such as briefing notes or workshops

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Louise Luxon-Kewley, it was

Resolved – That the work program be noted.

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