

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 19 June 2023

PRESENT – Councillors Ali, Allen, Crudass, Dillon, Durham, Johnson, Layton, Renton, Storr and Toms.

APOLOGIES – John Armitage and Sally Hudson.

ABSENT – Carly Stonier, Maura Regan, Tim Fisher and Janet Woodcock.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Wallis.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Chris Bell (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Tony Murphy (Assistant Director Education and Inclusion) and Paul Dalton (Elections Officer)

CYP1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/2024

RESOLVED - That Councillor Allen be appointed Chair of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

CYP2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/2024

RESOLVED - That Councillor Layton be appointed Vice-Chair of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

CYP3 TO CONSIDER THE TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/2024 ON THE DATES AGREED IN THE CALENDAR OF MEETINGS BY CABINET AT MINUTE C258/FEB/23

RESOLVED – That meetings of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2023/24, be held at 9.30 a.m. on the dates, as agreed on the calendar of meetings by Cabinet at Minute C258/Feb/2023.

CYP4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP5 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY 2023

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 27 February 2023

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 27 February 2023 be approved as a correct record.

CYP6 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 3 2022/23

The Assistant Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to

provide Members with an update on performance against key performance indicators.

The submitted report provided Quarter 3 (October 2022 to December 2022) performance information in line with an indicator set agreed by the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group and subsequently by each individual Scrutiny Committee.

The submitted report also highlighted where Children and Young People were performing well and where there was a need to improve. It was also outlined that where indicators are reported annually, quarterly updates will not be available.

Members were keen to discover the extent of staff turnover in Children's Services, and the impact that this had on performance. Members were advised that staff turnover was consistent with the rates across the region, and anecdotally mirrored the national picture. It was noted that the challenge was one that was shared with Adults Services.

Members were also interested to learn more in relation to those Children in Care who needed to be placed 20 or miles away from home, and questioned whether the reason for need was captured. Members were advised that this indicator covered a relatively small number of children.

RESOLVED – That the content of the report be noted.

CYP7 THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

The Assistant Director, Children's Services, submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with a summary of the Government Response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, entitled "Stable Homes, Built with Love".

The submitted report stated that the Government had published a response to the Independent Review which took the form of a strategy which identified six pillars upon which the reform of Children's Social Care would be based. The submitted report informed Members that the Council were already actively involved in a Regional Fostering Pathfinder Project, alongside other North-East local authorities, and that the Scrutiny Committee could play a critical role in shaping how Children's Services responded to, and implemented, the other pillars identified within the report.

Members were keen to recognise that, whilst it was preferable that children remain with birth parents, or placed with wider family, families should not always be considered safe spaces for children, and were keen to discover more about how the Council ensured that extended families provided safe spaces.

Members noted that, in relation to the six pillars, it was pleasing to learn that the Council had initiatives in place to address each. Members were particularly interested in hearing more in relation to the fostering and retention programme, and ensuring that this was something that was delivering.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

CYP8 SEND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION

The Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion, submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members on the Ofsted / CQC Inspection on the provision of Special Educational Needs (SEND) support in Darlington and the subsequent development of a Written Statement of Action (WSOA).

The submitted report stated that between January 2022 and 1 February 2022, the local area of Darlington was inspected by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) and CQC (Care Quality Commission), and that the purpose of the inspection was to see how well the area had put in place the changes across all services that the Children and Families Act 2014 required for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and their families.

The submitted report highlighted that, whilst the lead inspector identified a number of strengths in the local area, there were also two areas of significant weakness identified across Darlington – namely the ineffectiveness of meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND and the impact of this on their outcomes, and poor preparation for adulthood and post-19 opportunities for children and young people with SEND. It was reported that actions were already taking place to address the highlighted concerns, however the report highlighted the need to accelerate these changes and implement the required improvements.

Members were keen to discover whether partners were working together to receive benefits, and to understand how the voices of young people were heard. Members were disappointed to learn that job opportunities frequently broke down within six months, due to a lack of SEND support, and wondered whether the YEI team would have capacity to coach employers to ensure that these opportunities weren't lost.

Members wanted to learn more about the scrutiny within the school setting, to ensure that actions identified within the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) were being undertaken by a school, and how the reported feedback aligned with the perception of parents. Members were keen to understand how those with SEND needs were involved in the governance development and arrangements.

Discussion ensued on the work undertaken by Third Sector providers, with Members enquiring as to whether there were any metrics as to the success. Members also highlighted the 20% year on year reduction target in terms of the numbers of requests for specialist provision for children and young people whose needs could continue to be met in mainstream education, noting the graduated model.

Focus returned to the relationship between parent and school, with Members seeking assurances around a parent's right to challenge, and the mechanisms in place to facilitate that challenge.

RESOLVED – That the Written Statement of Action be noted.

CYP9 WORK PROGRAMME 2023-2024

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that

consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included in the previously approved work programme.

Members proposed a review of the Performance Indicators received during the year to ensure that they remained relevant; an item on the Dedicated School Grant and the Safety Valve to provide a deeper understanding for the Members of the Committee; a review of Youth Engagement / Communication Strategy, with an additional focus on SEND; an item on Transitional Services (SEND) for 16 – 25 year olds; a review of School Transport and the associated services; and the delivery of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted accordingly.