

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 1/2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2017 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor EP Foley – Chairperson

N Farr	DK Edwards	CA Green	PN John
KJ Watts	CL Jones		

Registered Representatives

Rev Canon Edward J Evans	Church in Wales
Tim Cahalane	Roman Catholic Church
William Bond	Special School Sector

Apologies for Absence

Officers:

Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

251. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Craig Jones declared a personal interest in item 6 as he sat on the Trade Union Group for the Central South Consortium.

252. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Committee referred to minute 247, Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017-18 to 2020-21 and the Head of Education and Family Support comment that she would investigate the concerns raised by the committee regarding school meals. Members had not been approached regarding this matter and information was still outstanding on a number of other issues. The Scrutiny Support Officer confirmed that this information was still outstanding and she would chase it up.

Re Minute 248, Nomination to the Collaborative Scrutiny, at the last meeting, Councillor C Westwood was nominated as a reserve. Councillor Westwood no longer sat on the Committee however Members agreed not to nominate another reserve.

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 December 2016 be approved as a true and accurate record.

253. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services submitted a report, the purpose of which was to present the items due to be considered at the Committee meeting scheduled to be held on 20 April 2017.

A report on the FE Sector would replace School Modernisation at the 20 April 2017 meeting. Members were invited to submit items that they would like included in the work programme for 2017-18. Members suggested an examination of the Central South Consortium and analysing welsh in the Education Plan. They agreed to complete and submit the appropriate forms.

RESOLVED That Members noted the topics due to be considered at the next Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

254. RESIDENTIAL CHILDCARE PROVISION AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - RESIDENTIAL AND RESOURCE BOARD

The Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report updating the Committee about the revised service model within Bakers Way, the work undertaken within the placements residential and resource project board, the rota visiting undertaken in respect of the 3 in house residential units and the last 3 inspection reports for in house residential units.

Bakers Way had been open for just over 25 years and was a 5 bedded respite unit for children with disabilities. It provided a traditional model of care and the project was set up to ensure that the current service being delivered was meeting the needs of the children and young people accessing the service. The Bakers Way service continued to be delivered from the existing building, offering overnight breaks from Tuesday to Saturday, with no overnight short breaks on Wednesdays, when the outreach service would continue to run. Formal staff consultation would commence in January 2017 over a four week period with a three month change of contract notice period then being served. This would lead to the new service model being operational in May 2017. A bid for capital minor works funding had been submitted to enable adaptation works to be carried out in Bakers Way during 2017 to ensure all children had equal access to the services available within the unit and to adjust the existing door frames to be EU compliant with new larger wheelchairs which were now being utilised.

The Committee referred to the CSSIW report on Bakers Way and the recommendation to achieve improvements for children and young people by not making emergency short term placements which necessitated cancelling services for other younger people and adversely affected the support for those families. The Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing explained that this related to an emergency placement which was the only option available at that time and CSSIW were fully consulted and understood the need for the placement to be made. This issue had been discussed within the Children with Disabilities Board and was one of the reasons why the establishment of a 52 week in house provision in Heronsbridge was being proposed.

The Committee referred to the £100k savings linked to the remodelling of Bakers Way and questioned the level of take up. The Group Manager - Commissioning Contracts and Contract Monitoring reported that the 15/16 level was 60% however now it was closed for two days, occupancy levels were more like 90%. The Committee commented on the need to ensure proper support and adequate financing for any changes or developments to Children's Residential Homes, particularly in light of the need for savings in this area. The Committee requested that this be considered under the new FWP to monitor the progress and expenditure against savings requirements.

The Committee asked if the formal consultation was underway. Members were advised that discussions with HR were still ongoing and the consultation would commence when discussions were concluded.

The Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing explained that the Placements, Residential and Resource Project Board had been overseeing a review of the two residential care homes, Sunnybank and Newbridge House. The aim of the project was to review children's residential provision, identify gaps in service delivery and to develop a strategy to mitigate these gaps whilst achieving efficiencies and income through service delivery. The Committee requested that a visit be organised to Sunnybank House for a small group of Members from the CYP Committee.

Sunnybank Complex Needs Unit housed four beds for complex needs. There was no local provision for complex needs and some children were placed in high cost out of county placements. The project Board was considering if those needs could be met in-house as a potential source of savings. The Board was also looking at determining whether therapy services could be found and commissioned externally, in-county or whether an in house residential service was required.

Newbridge House was a transition unit for 16-17 years to independence but there were limited options available in terms of suitable accommodation for young people to reside in. A huge analysis had been undertaken to identify options to alter the provision.

The Group Manager - Commissioning Contracts and Contract Monitoring explained the reasons why placements were under pressure and the options that were being developed. The options appraisal to be undertaken in February 2017 would show what combination of assessment units, complex needs units, transition units and long term residential would be needed to move forward. Workshops would also be held to engage with children and those that had been through the system.

The Committee referred to consideration being given to foster carers being trained to the same therapeutic level as residential workers. Members were advised that information was being gathered on the skill mixes of individuals and how they could be used more effectively.

The Group Manager - Commissioning Contracts and Contract Monitoring explained that there were conversations with neighbouring authorities and Western Bay which were not part of an official strategy but just part of working together. The Committee strongly supported regional working for the provision of complex needs and recommended that this be formalised with a clear strategy and plan to take this forward in order to increase options and provision.

The Committee referred to the importance of a dialogue with health in relation to children with complex needs. The Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing explained that there were representatives from Health and Police on the project Board. The Committee asked for further information regarding the funding contributions for those organisations on the project Board.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help reported that more fostering parents and carers were needed. Training was essential and even though foster parents could not be forced to undergo training, the most suitable foster carers should be used for appropriate cases.

The Committee asked if the therapeutic approaches suggested would be suitable for mental health issues and if they were in line with best practice. The Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing explained that there appeared to be an increase in the

numbers with emotional issues across Wales. Concerns had been raised about the service that could be offered and a gap in the provision and work was being undertaken to fill this gap more effectively.

The Members requested more information why young people felt that their voices were not being heard, was it because they were being prevented from doing things. Members were advised that the comments made by young people were in the context of their own personal views on what they felt they should have and was reasonable. This was a difficult area and it was important to listen to each child individually. Members recommended the need for further work to be undertaken for advocacy for children and young people to ensure that their voices are heard and their views taken on-board.

Members raised concerns that 2 care homes were reasonable and 1 was close to failing with no improvement to date and was the right model in place to deal with the challenges. The Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing explained that work was underway to address the problem. The current model was being reviewed to find something more suitable. There was a police presence at the moment with support being offered to break down barriers and to review the missing child register and the Child Sexual Exploitation register.

Members referred to the point raised about long term sickness and overall morale of the staff group and the need to address this issue urgently. Members were advised that dealing with challenging children and behaviour was a difficult area and additional staffing was provided where possible. Training was given to managers and staff along with proper consultation and engagement.

The Committee referred to the establishment of a group to look at Looked After Children, the cost of placements and the importance of this role for a future scrutiny committee.

The Committee suggested that all members of the Children and Young People and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committees should carry out rota visits. Members were pleased that private sector children's homes were now incorporated into the Rota Visiting Scheme but expressed disappointment at the level of visits reported. The Committee recommended that Rota Visiting should be a condition of service for Members sitting on the Children and Young People and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees to ensure that more venues are visited more regularly than are currently.

Conclusions

The Committee strongly supported regional working for the provision of complex needs and recommended that this be formalised with a clear strategy and plan to take this forward in order to increase options and provision.

Members recommended the need for further work to be undertaken for advocacy for children and young people to ensure that their voices are heard and their views taken on-board.

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Rota Visiting

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The Committee requested that a visit be organised to Sunnybank House for a small group of Members from the CYP Committee.

The Committee asked for further information regarding the funding contributions for those organisations on the project board.

255. FOUNDATION PHASE, KEY STAGES 2, 3, 4 AND POST 16 OUTCOMES FOR 2015/16

The Director of Education and Family Support presented a report on Foundation Phase, Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and Post 16 Outcomes for 2015/16.

Standards over a three year period were continuing to improve in line with national rates of improvement. Bridgend was improving better than national averages in many indicators and better than similar local authorities, based on national ranking, in most indicators.

The Director of Education and Family Support was pleased with progress that had been made compared to the same report in 2012/13. There was self- sustaining improvement and high aspirations for learners. A very strong team was in place and there was a strong partnership with the Consortium and schools.

The second part of the report was a Central South Consortium paper relating to raising standards in Bridgend schools. The three priorities of the Consortium business plan; raising standards, improving the capacity of the system to be self-improving and developing the consortium to a high performing organisation; were highlighted. Since 2012, standards had improved rapidly compared to the national average across the region at every key stage. In 2016 the region continued to show strong improvement and was above the national average at every key stage for the first time and remained above it for the second year in key stages 1,2 and 4. During 2015/16, three local authorities in the region were removed from an Estyn follow up category and all three inspection reports cited the contribution of the Consortium in working effectively to improve outcomes for learners. In March 2016 the Consortium was inspected by Estyn. The inspection report recognised progress in establishing clear strategy, vision, delivery of consistent challenge and support and partnership working. The 2017/18 business plan would be developed in the context of a number of specific strategic challenges as well as areas where self-evaluation indicated areas for improvement. The final business plan for the financial year 17/18 would be presented to the Joint Committee for approval in March 2017.

Members raised a number of issues regarding the report. The report indicated that there were eleven more amber category schools in 2016/17 compared to 2015/16. Members asked how these were identified. Amber category schools were identified by the standards group having taken into account the ability of the school to improve based on performance over three years. Through the categorisation process, more support could be provided through temporary leadership and monitoring schools more closely. The leader confirmed there were fewer schools in amber, none in red and a significant increase in the number in green.

Members asked for a % point for the difference in performance between Bridgend and the national averages (Key Stage 2) The Group Manager for Schools Improvement explained that this was a summary within the report and that the actual % point was in the table. There was a combined indicator but 4 percentages were provided to give an overall picture of progress.

A statement had been made in Council that Pencoed was improving however the report indicated that there was a decline in performance in Pencoed. Members were advised that secondary school pre 16 outcomes were not an area of concern, the report referred to the sixth form only. The decline in performance was being addressed through the establishment of the new Penybont 6th College in partnership with Bridgend College.

The Committee expressed some concern over the sometimes negative perception coming from the Consortium in the way they reported individual school performance. A member had raised this with the Consortium but to date had not received a response. The Leader accepted the concern raised and confirmed that the report should be positive to reflect the amount of work put in. The Authority had the best results in the region. Members agreed that schools needed to know where they stood and the status of their performance, however there was often a fine balance between motivation and negativity and care needed to be taken with this

A member of the Committee requested further information regarding the recruitment of welsh speakers and Welsh Government targets. The Director of Education and Family Support explained that welsh in the Education Strategic Plan set out would be done to meet demands from parents and agreed to discuss the matter further with the member if required.

The Committee asked if there were issues with recruitment. Members were advised that there was a supply pool and the opportunity for a school to over recruit and to support other schools as and when required. There was a graduate training programme and a pilot scheme for core subjects.

The Committee asked how the four recommendations identified in the Estyn report were being tackled and how successful had they been. Members were advised that Estyn would return in September and report progress. It was difficult to demonstrate progress in the first recommendation, reducing variations in standards at KS4, but officers were hopeful that progress had been made.

Clarity of judgement was being sought in relation to the second recommendation, improving specificity of judgements of teaching and leadership by challenge advisers.

The third recommendation, evaluating impact of support strategies, was difficult to measure apart from pupil outcomes. Research evaluation work was underway with Cardiff University which would hopefully show progress.

Estyn would evidence the fourth recommendation, value for money.

The Leader explained that this was an issue discussed at the Joint Committee and he had seen evidence that the four recommendations were being addressed.

The Committee welcomed the inclusion of Post 16 and ALPs data in the school performance report and requested that future reports also include LAC data and A level STEM subjects information.

The Director of Education and Family Support explained that data training was available for Time and access to the knowledge hub if required. She thanked the three officers attending their last meeting, for their hard work and wished them all the best in the future. The Leader echoed the message and thanked the officers personally.

Conclusions

The Committee expressed some concern over the sometimes negative perception coming from the Consortium in the way they report about individual school performance. Members agreed that schools need to know where they stand and the status of their performance, however there is often a fine balance between motivation and negativity and care needs to be taken with this.

The Committee welcomed the inclusion of Post 16 and ALPs data in the school performance report and requested that future reports also include LAC data and A level STEM subjects information.

The Committee requested that future reports also contain three year trend data for KS4 for individual schools in order to identify any potential areas of concern.

The Committee requested that they be sent the final press release regarding the outcome of school categorisation for the County Borough

256. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 5.00 pm