

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Tuesday, 16th July, 2019.

Present:- Councillors Ajaib, Basra, Begum, N Holledge, Kelly, Qaseem, A Sandhu, Sarfraz and Kassapian

Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members P Kassapian

Apologies for absence F El Sayed

PART 1

63. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Kelly declared his employment with Lynch Hill School Primary Academy.

64. Election of chair and vice-chair

Resolved: That Councillor Sharif be elected as Chair and Councillor Kelly as Vice Chair of the Panel for the 2019/20 municipal year.

65. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th April 2019

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2019 be approved as a correct record

66. Member Questions

No questions were raised at the meeting.

67. Childrens Centres Task and Finish Group - Final Report and Recommendations

The Panel received a report which provided an update on the recommendations contained with the Children's Centres Task and Finish Group of 7 February 2019.

The Service Lead, Early Years and Prevention outlined the content of the report and provided an update on each of the recommendations. He advised that whilst significant progress had been made, there was more work to be done. A schedule of reviews would be submitted to the Panel every two years and any changes to a Centre would be discussed with the relevant Ward Councillors with any significant decisions submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

In terms of the timeframe for the works at Children's Centres, the officer advised it would be at least one year as statutory services

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required delivery whilst the works were carried out. Resources had been identified for the refurbishment but he was looking to establish whether approval for funding was required as it had been allocated for under 5s and the Council was looking to extend the offer. He added that consultation with parents/carers had commenced in order to identify what services they would like to see in their local area. The provision for 6-11 year olds across Slough varied considerably.

A Member questioned whether there were any financial risks associated with recommendation 2, the relationship of the Children's Centre and Heathrow, and was advised that there were on going conversations with the collaborative groups. Until the Heathrow issues were clarified it was not possible to say what service provision would be.

In response to a Member's question as to whether new school builds could include a Children's Centre, the officer advised that whilst early years' provision had been identified for some developments, officers were looking to use this in a slightly different way. Another Member expressed the view that it was not financially viable for many schools to offer the 30 hour child care entitlement. The officer advised that the costs were different in children's centres and that Slough paid providers the highest sum in the region.

Members were pleased to note that six apprentices had been recruited to work in Children's Centres from September and that many of the staff employed were residents of Slough.

Resolved – That the status of the recommendations, as set in section 4 of the officer report, be noted.

68. Implementation of SEND reforms

The Panel received a report which provided an update on the Implementation of SEND reforms.

Vikram Hansrani, Service Lead Inclusion, outlined the content of the report, drawing Members' attention to a typographical error in paragraph 5.3. In response to a Member's question as to the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) not completed within the 20 week timeframe, he explained that there were peaks and troughs due to school holidays and that he would provide this information separately. The priority was to ensure the right support at the right time and that once a child had an EHCP it would be reviewed on an annual basis.

In response to a Member's concern at the overspend in relation to SEND, Cate Duffy, Director of Children, Learning and Skills, advised that as this related to the High Needs Block, it was outside of the Council's budget and was within the Designated Schools Grant (DSG).

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She explained that the Department for Education had indicated that the Council needed to address the overspend (approximately £7.2m at the end of 2018/19) which had partly been caused by changes in legislation. The Council were working to ensure that value for money was achieved and had prepared a deficit budget plan. This was a national issue and would be looked at once the spending review had been completed.

In terms of the SENCO officer, Vikram Hansrani reported that this post had been well received and that the feedback to date had been positive.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

69. Joint Parenting Panel Quarterly Update

The Panel received the report which provided an update on the work of the Joint Parenting Panel since the last meeting.

Cate Duffy, Director of Children, Learning and Skills, outlined the content of the report and responded to questions and comments from Members as follows:-

- Work was still required to determine why there were Children Looked After who did not have an up to date health check;
- Ofsted had determined that the Children's Services Trust was no longer a failing service. The recruitment and retention of a high quality workforce was the biggest challenge facing the service. In order to try to address this issue, trainers were being use, incentive packages offered and agency staff made permanent. It was important to have good leadership and middle management in place in order to train, develop and retain staff;
- There would be no immediate impact as a result of Brexit on the team.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

70. Forward Work Programme

Forward Work Programme

The Panel reviewed the current work programme.

Cate Duffy, Director of Children, Learning and Skills, reminded Members that their previous suggestions for topics had included leisure, libraries and mental health. She sought Members views as to whether they would perhaps wish to go out on visits for some topics and receive formal reports on others. Members could meet with the Youth Parliament and Mental Health champions or invite Groups to talk to the Panel to seek their views and incorporate this in the work programme.

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Topics suggested by the Panel included:-

- School places and assisting parents in understanding the admissions process;
- Unauthorised absences ;
- Leisure centre activities;
- Recruitment and retention of social workers
- Mental health

Resolved – That officers prepare proposals for the work programme for the Panel's consideration.

71. Date of Next Meeting - 23rd October 2019

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Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.16 pm)