



**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
9 JANUARY 2019
7.30 - 9.21 PM**

Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Ms Gaw, Mrs Hamilton, Ms Hayes, Virgo and Mrs Temperton

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Brossard, Mrs McCracken and Skinner, Ms D Owen, Teacher Representative, Ms C Barrett, Children's Social Care Representative

Executive Members:

Councillor Dr Barnard

Also Present:

Sonia Johnson, Assistant Director: Children's Social Care
Rachel Morgan, Assistant Director, Education & Learning
Paul Clark, Finance Business Partner

27. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 26 September 2018 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

Arising from the minutes it was noted a visit had not yet been arranged for members to visit Holly House or Rainforest Walk as refurbishments were ongoing.

28. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest relating to any items on the agenda, nor any indication that Members would be participating under the party whip.

29. Urgent Items of Business

Rachel Morgan, Assistant Director: Education and Learning, provided an update to members about current activities in the People Directorate.

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of this item which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

(3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority).

30. Public Participation

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

31. Draft Budget Proposals 2019/20

Paul Clark, Finance Business Partner, provided an overview on the proposed items in the revenue budget for 2019/20 affecting children, young people and learning. He explained the key parts were prior commitments; proposals regarding new pressures and proposed efficiencies and savings. The current deficit to meet identified needs for Children and Young People was £2.5m. Options available to the Council in order to address the funding gap included raising council tax; drawing down from reserves and/or making reductions in expenditure.

As a result of discussions the following comments and questions were made:

Revenue Budget

- Members queried a £135k pressure listed in Schools ICT services when three posts had been deleted. It was believed the pressure on that line corresponded to another line which offset the pressure but the member was advised to ask the Interim Executive Director: Delivery directly as they would be better placed to answer this question.
- Members asked why there was a proposed £46k saving anticipated in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) budget at a time when needs were increasing. It was acknowledged SEN was an area of growing need but the saving related to a review of roles and responsibilities in this area to ensure the right people were in the right roles according to national and local priorities.
- Members asked how the Council would ensure the same level of service for training parents and carers to support children with specialist medical needs as it was noted the funding arrangements were changing. Members received assurances that training would be funded by East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in the future but processes and people delivering the training would remain the same.
- Members asked the Finance Business Officer what the greatest pressure was for 2019/20 and were directed towards Annex C on Page 30 of the Agenda which highlighted the changes and explained these were not considered to impact significantly on services. Cllr Gareth Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning noted pressures were usually due to increasing numbers of looked after children (LAC) and an increase in complexity of needs. In order to cope with those pressures the department had already e-engineered their approach to the 'front door' to ensure good multi-agency working as well as making changes to the School Improvement Team to hold governors and senior leaders to account more effectively.
- Members queried if children without needs were receiving less as resources were needed for children with higher needs. Cllr Gareth Barnard responded that at the last School's Forum it was announced a further £1m was being committed for revenue needs of schools offering additional places for all children and there was a tenuous link between school funding and attainment. The crucial thing was strong leadership. He also noted some schools had accumulated substantial sums of money and there was an argument it should be spent on those children attending that school currently and Ofsted showed Bracknell had made good progress in that area.
- It was noted the data relating to housing related savings on Page 30 should not have appeared in the agenda as they would be scrutinised by the Adult Social Care, Health and Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

Capital Budget

Paul Clark, Finance Business Partner, explained the budget, as set out on Page 55, Annex C, showed investment of £13m in services for children and young people.

- Members asked if the merger of Ascot Health Infant School and Ascot Heath Junior School was funded by the Church of England or the Council? The Finance Business Partner explained the amalgamation was complicated by land ownership issues but following a conversation with the Oxfordshire Diocese ownership of the land would rest with the Council and the legal transfer was currently being finalised. Cllr Gareth Barnard explained that whilst the Council would take on financial issues relating to the schools the amalgamation would allow the schools to become one entity, one strong leadership team and improve education on the site.
- Members were keen to learn when the new youth facility at Braccan Walk, as per the funding stream on Page 66, would be ready. Cllr Gareth Barnard informed members that it was included in the capital funding pending the conclusion of the feasibility study so that the funds for the project were in the budget. It was noted children and young people had been heavily involved in developing what the youth facility would look like.

32. Overview of departmental changes

Rachel Morgan, Assistant Director: Education & Learning and Sonia Johnson, Assistant Director: Children's Social Care updated members on changes in the People's Directorate as part of the transformation project..

- The two posts coloured blue on the slide related to Rachel Morgan's post Assistant Director: Education and Learning and Sonia Johnson's post Director: Children's Social Care. Both were permanent appointments.
- The two posts coloured peach on the slide straddled Adults and Children functions.
- Hannah Doherty had been appointed Head of Welfare and Housing on an interim basis and a permanent person would begin in April.
- Thom Wilson had been appointed Assistant Director: Commissioning permanently.
- Sarah Gee had been appointed Assistant Director: Early Help and Communities permanently.
- Melanie O'Rourke had been appointed Assistant Director: Adult Social Care permanently.

In relation to education Rachel Morgan explained they were continuing with the Head of Service restructure and some posts would be advertised externally. They were also recruiting a Business Relationship Manager to work with schools on Service Level Agreements (SLAs) which the Council was establishing from April 2019. These were all new roles and part of the restructure.

In relation to Children's Social Care Sonia Johnson explained four service areas had been merged into three and three senior posts had been created. The Head of Permanence post was now the Head of Life Chances.

Rachel Morgan explained some roles sat under different posts now. For example, the Assistant Director: Early Help and Communities would be responsible for early help hubs; children centres and education welfare officers so there was some cross-over and an expectation teams would work together. Rachel Morgan agreed to update the slide and send to Louise Connolly for publication.

Cllr Gill Birch requested an updated version with names be circulated at the March meeting.

Actions:

- **Rachel Morgan to update departmental slide and send to Louise Connelly.**
- **Louise Connelly, Governance & Scrutiny Co-ordinator, to publish departmental slide.**
- **Rachel Morgan/Nikki Edwards to circulate updated version at next meeting, including named individuals.**

33. Local Authority School Data Dashboard

Cllr Gill Birch explained the School Improvement Accountability Board had reviewed a useful dashboard and requested Rachel Morgan present it to members of this Panel.

Rachel Morgan explained the Mime Local Authority Dashboard was a snapshot of the Council's most recent data prepared by an external organisation on behalf of the local authority. It contained both national and local data; an overview on Page 4 of all schools within Bracknell and their Ofsted rating. Page 5 detailed Bracknell's characteristics. The document allowed for comparison with Bracknell's statistical neighbours (Page 10) and all schools in England. The document was structured to show trends throughout 2015-18. It was noted KS2 data on Page 6 was currently provisional. The next version of the dashboard would be finalised end of March.

As a result of discussions the following comments and questions were made:

- Members queried why a large percentage of Bracknell primary aged pupils attended schools in other local authorities. The figure was 5.6 compared to 3.1 but the document showed it as a positive. It was agreed the document illustrated the trend but it was not seen as a positive. Rachel Morgan agreed to ask the external company to check this and make it clearer if the arrow referred to negative trend or a positive trend. Cllr Gareth Barnard responded that whilst they were aware of the issue it should be noted some parents put in a preference for schools out of Borough as it was geographically closer and that some neighbouring authorities had additional surplus places this year than previously. Data indicated GCSE results were the best Bracknell as a whole had ever received.
- It was noted there was a pressure on places in Sixth Form Colleges so a number of young people went out of the Borough for education at this age.
- Members queried if there was a difference in achievement between boys and girls. Data showed boys do as well as girls in early years locally but less well as they progressed through primary school and was an issue the team were aware of and investigating. The team tracked pupil data and it showed where there was strong leadership in schools boys and girls would both achieve to a similar standard.
- Members were concerned the local authority was ranked 10th for the number of Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPlans) at primary age and queried if needs were not being identified early enough, particularly as the Council was ranked second at secondary age. Rachel Morgan explained that whilst EHCPlans were being issued the restructure within Education and Learning meant the SEN team were spending time collating and working with schools. Jackie Ross, Interim Head of SEN was beginning to deal with this issue. It was agreed this should be a focus for the SEN Task & Finish Group and

- would be useful to explore the need to deliver more training to enable staff to identify needs earlier.
- Overall, members observed the document was really useful, allowed scrutiny of trend data and requested it be presented next time it is updated.

Actions:

- Rachel Morgan to ask external company compiling Mime LA Dashboard to look at trend data in the report and make it clear when it is not positive.**
- Cllr Gill Birch to ensure SEN issue incorporated into SEN Task & Finish scope.**
- Rachel Morgan to add Mime LA Data to agenda when next updated.**

34. Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel

Members noted the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel held on 21 September 2018.

35. Update on Task & Finish Groups

Cllr Dee Hamilton, Chair of Improving the experience and outcomes of Pupil Premium (double disadvantaged) children, thanked Zoe Livingstone, School Effectiveness Partner, and Louise Connelly, Governance & Scrutiny Co-ordinator for their hard work pulling information together for the group and organising visits. Members had visited five local schools and visited Didcot Girls School in Oxfordshire as it was known for its excellent outcomes for children in receipt of Pupil Premium funding. During visits members visited lessons, spoke to pupils, senior leaders and governors. They were impressed with how welcoming school leaders had been and were open and honest about issues in this area. It was reported there had been a good response rate to the school's questionnaire and meetings had been set up to discuss the findings before bringing the report to the next Panel meeting.

Cllr Gill Birch informed members the scoping exercise for the Special Educational Needs Task & Finish Group was going to be scoped and members would be welcome to join this Group.

36. Quarterly Service Report (QSR)

Members noted Quarter 3 data was not due to be circulated until later in the month so a verbal update was given by Sonia Johnson and Rachel Morgan.

Sonia Johnson reported a rise in the number of children looked after by the local authority. It was acknowledged it was hard to anticipate need so this performance indicator was high compared to the target set locally but still below national. The team anticipated a further rise against this performance indicator in the future.

It was reported the average number of case-loads per social worker was 15.9, an increase in Quarter 2 from 14.9 and higher than the Council's aim of 13. However, vacancy rates were still low – currently at seven with three staff currently in the process of being recruited. Some agency staff had converted to permanent contracts which provided continuity for children. However, the Children's Trusts in Slough and Reading had come out of the south east agreement. The agreement included a cap on pay for agency staff and not taking a permanent member of staff at another south east authority on as agency staff. The situation was being closely monitored. Members agreed it was really important to remain child focused; continue to keep

caseloads low; keep the department well-resourced and attract newly qualified social workers and students.

Members asked how many children and young people the Council looked after currently and were informed there were 53 children categorised as a child looked after and 64 identified as a child in need. Members asked if the data could be broken down into wards for further analysis. Sonia Johnson agreed to bring this back to a future Panel meeting.

Rachel Morgan informed members 43 out of 48 EHCPs were issued within the 20 week timeframe. Five were issued outside of the 20 week timeframe due to three waiting for a placement and one waiting for professional assessment outside the Borough. One had been delayed due to the need to talk to the parents who had been on holiday. It was noted in Bracknell Forest Council's Ofsted they were one of the few authorities to do well on this indicator.

Members were informed the performance indicator for children completing apprenticeships required changing as the current target was five per quarter and this had proved challenging. 'Elevate Me Bracknell' worked well with young people not in education, employment or training (NEETS) but apprenticeships had proven way too demanding for some young people. To assist young people Elevate Me had looked at securing other elements of training, further employment, and making sure the apprenticeship was right for the young person. Members asked if apprenticeships were being offered to higher achieving children also and were informed they were but it was not tracked as the target focused on NEETS, hence the need to track all apprenticeships through service plans but have a particular focus on NEETS.

Rachel Morgan informed members the percentage of schools rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding was improving which was attributed partly to the successful Improvement Strategy. Last year 12 Ofsted inspections had taken place in Bracknell schools. One school went from Good to Requires Improvement but the Council had been involved prior to the visit and this had been seen as a positive by Ofsted. Cranbourne Primary School went from Good to Outstanding which was a real success for everyone involved and senior leaders were congratulated. Foxhill Primary School went from Requires Improvement to Good and College Hall Pupil Referral Unit remained good. Members noted when they visited Foxhill as part of the Improving the Experience and Outcomes of Pupil Premium (Double Disadvantaged) Children a dynamic governing body and excellent leadership team. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) were amber due to a partnership arrangement with other East Berkshire authorities (Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead) and East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group which had taken time to launch but was beginning to make progress.

Actions:

- **Sonia Johnson to bring LAC and CIN data, broken down by ward, to a future Panel meeting.**

37. Executive Forward Plan

The Panel received and noted the scheduled Key and Non-Key Executive Member Decisions relating to Children, Young People and Learning.

38. School Improvement Accountability Board

Members noted the report of the School Improvement Accountability Board held on 22 November 2018.

39. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be 20 March 2019.

CHAIRMAN