

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
10 JANUARY 2018
7.30 - 9.33 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Ms Gaw, Mrs Hamilton, Ms Hayes, Skinner, Virgo, Mrs Temperton and Peacey (Substitute)

Executive Members:

Councillors Dr Barnard

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs McCracken and Miss V Richardson

In Attendance:

Nikki Edwards, Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Rachel Morgan, Head of Standards and Effectiveness

83. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 27 September 2017 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

84. 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 whilst under the party whip.

85. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

86. Public Participation

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

87. Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel

The Panel noted the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel meeting of 29 September 2017.

88. 2018/19 Draft Budget Proposals

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning presented the Draft Budget Proposals for 2018/19 for Children, Young People and Learning.

It was noted that any specific financial questions from Members would be directed to the Finance Business Partner for Children, Young People and Learning.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- It was clarified that provision for inflation and pay awards would come out of the schools budget.
- Clarity was requested around paragraph 8.13 and 8.14 in the report regarding reduction in schools budget. The Director commented that no school in Bracknell Forest was in a detrimental budget situation, rather there were some schools which would gain more than others. The central government agreed national funding formula for schools put a cap on the amount to be passed to schools over a 2 year implementation period. Members requested that this message be clarified before being publicised to schools and through the budget.
- The revenue funding values from Pupil Premium and Free School Meals grants was not yet known for 2018/19. It was anticipated that other demands on school budgets such as pay awards to teaching staff may not be included in the grant allocation.
- Members recognised the potential impact of having a change of Minister for Education in central government.
- It was clarified that the Local Authority would be supporting all schools to ensure their budget was used to best effect.
- Following the withdrawal of the Educational Services grant, the Schools Forum had agreed to contribute £20 per child to fund Educational Services going forward.
- Although the timescale to respond to the settlement seemed short to Members, the Director gave reassurance that Governing Bodies had seen the information in draft form before the settlement was formally released on 16 December 2017.
- The outcomes for other Local Authorities were not known, however it was understood that the London boroughs and large county Councils had not benefitted from the new formula.
- Members were reassured that the Elevate programme would remain in Bracknell Forest, however the mechanics of delivery would change to meet the demand of online services rather than a shop front in Princess Square.
- Statutory education psychology on the recommendation of a school would continue to be funded by the Local Authority, but parents who requested an education psychologist assessment would now be charged.
- It was clarified that if CAMHS or another Health service referred a child to Education Services, they should describe the necessary outcome rather than prescribing a service such as Education Psychology.
- It was requested that Members' concern be noted regarding the figures in the Capital Programme bids, as it was felt that these were too costly.

89. **Virtual School Annual Report 2016/17**

The Panel noted the Annual Report on the work of the Virtual School 2016-17.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- It was clarified that Special Educational Needs may be undiagnosed in those Virtual School children living out of area. There may also be children in the cohort for whom Special Educational Needs would become evident later in their development, such as asylum seeking children.
- It was clarified that where the Annual Report referred to the cohort attending 63 schools during 2016/17 (37 of which were in other Local Authorities), this

included those in Years 12 and 13. Where the Annual Report referred elsewhere to the cohort attending 63 schools across 20 Local Authorities, this referred to Reception to Year 11 only. The Panel requested details of which other Local Authorities were hosting Virtual School children.

- The Panel particularly welcomed the fact that 17 Looked After Children had been on Work Experience in the year 2016/17.
- The Panel recognised and congratulated the Virtual School on the achievements of Young People aged over 16 and Care Leavers.

90. **Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) Annual Report 2016/17**

The Panel noted the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2016/17.

It was noted that the Annual Report was written prior to the LSCB Ofsted inspection at the same time as the Local Authority inspection. The inspection would be discussed in the next Annual Report.

The Director commented on the strength of the partnership, and the links with other strategic partnerships across the Council.

The Panel recognised the pending developments of safeguarding arrangements, which was due to change the governance and funding arrangements across the key safeguarding partners which were the Local Authority, Police and Health. The success of current Bracknell Forest arrangements was noted. The Director raised her concern that schools were not included in the new arrangements as a statutory safeguarding partner.

In response to comments and discussion, the following points were noted:

- It was noted that the Common Assessment Form was no longer used as a referral tool, as the MASH now dealt with referrals into Children's Social Care.
- Regarding the increase in children subject to Child Protection Plans, officers were unsure whether this rising trend would increase as a result of sexual abuse being exposed in the public forum. It was recognised that children were referred under one concern, but more abusive influences may become evident as they grow.
- Members were reassured that Ofsted inspectors had gone through the Child Protection cases in great detail, and that lots of work had been done to address the rise in numbers during 2017. At the end of December, number of children subject to plans had reduced by a third, while the number of children in care had risen a little.
- Members were reminded that while sexual abuse was often committed by a family member or someone else known to the child, the numbers were very few in Bracknell Forest.
- It was noted that the foster carers were trained for any instance of disclosure, so if a child were to make a disclosure they would be prepared.
- Elective Home Education had been a key focus of LSCBs nationally, as there was not enough legislation to protect children being home educated. All the Executive Members for Children's Services in Berkshire were making representation to Government on this issue.

91. **Quarterly Service Report**

The Panel received the Quarterly Service Report for Quarter 2, 2017-18. It was noted that future QSRs would have separated data between academies and maintained school performance.

In response to question, the following points were noted:

- The Panel were surprised to note that the average caseload for children's social workers was 18.5, and commented that this was high.
- The use of Pupil Premium Grant was being discussed at a Pupil Premium Grant network meeting and on a pan-Berkshire arrangement. The focus in Bracknell Forest was on Reading and Phonics at KS1, and attainment levels at KS4.
- There had been a number of officers who had left the authority following the successful Ofsted inspection, as they had been headhunted by other Local Authorities. Retention was being assessed. It was noted that the Family Safeguarding Model pilot at Bracknell Forest was a unique opportunity and would be an asset to the career of those working on it.
- There were close links with universities delivering social work degrees, and Bracknell Forest was a host for Step Up to Social Work in Berkshire.
- Members were reminded that although the number of young people undertaking apprenticeships had decreased, the small numbers in Bracknell Forest represented a greater percentage. Work was being undertaken by the Local Authority, Bracknell and Wokingham College and others to promote apprenticeships.
- Bracknell Forest schools had Ofsted inspections every 5 years, and it was anticipated that the number of primary schools rated Good/Outstanding was currently higher than indicated in the past Ofsted outcomes.
- All Ofsted inspections for post-16 provision would now assess the quality of careers advice.

The Head of Standards and Effectiveness distributed the Inspection Outcomes report. In the last term, there had been five Ofsted inspections which had demonstrated good support from the Local Authority.

92. **Children Young People and Learning Statutory Annual Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Report 2016/17**

The Panel noted the Children, Young People and Learning Statutory Annual Complaints, Concerns and Compliments 2016/17 report.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- The £5,000 per annum allocated for Stage 3 investigations would be taken from the base budget to fund independent investigators. The possibility of employing a joint complaints officer for Children Young People and Learning and Adult Social Care, Health and Housing was being investigated.
- The Panel were pleased to note that there were so few complaints compared to the number of individuals in contact with the directorate.

93. **Children's Social Care Quality Assurance and Annual Report 2016/17**

The Panel noted the Children's Social Care Quality Assurance and Annual Report 2016/17, and recognised the learning which had come out of the audit process.

94. **2018/19 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Panel noted the 2018/19 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme, and suggested that a review on Special Educational Needs might be a good focus for the Panel.

95. **'Unlocking Opportunities for Children' Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Improvement Strategy 2017/20**

The Panel received the 'Unlocking Opportunities for Children' Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Improvement Strategy 2017/20.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Members were pleased to recognise the number of organisations involved in the production of the strategy, which highlighted the strength of partnership working in Bracknell Forest.
- Support for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities was given through schools, although officers commented that sometimes teachers were misidentifying the needs of those with challenging behaviour as SEND. The Local Authority was pursuing funding to employ a group of SENCOs to work across Bracknell Forest Schools to provide support where necessary.
- The greatest need for SEND across Bracknell Forest was around Autism Spectrum Disorder, and outcomes based commissioning was being used to meet these needs.

The Panel requested a visit to the Children's Centres to find out about their work with children with SEND.

96. **Schools Accessibility Strategy 2017-20**

The Panel noted the Schools Accessibility Strategy 2017-20.

97. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Panel noted the items on the Executive Forward Plan.

98. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

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 the following item which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

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

99. **School Improvement Accountability Board**

The Panel noted the minutes of the most recent School Improvement Accountability Board.

CHAIRMAN

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