

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 March 2019

Present:-

Councillors R Hannaford (Chair), S Aves, F Biederman, J Brazil, E Brennan, C Channon, I Chubb, J Hawkins, L Hellyer, R Hosking, J Mathews, A Saywell and C Mabin

Apologies:

Councillors D Sellis, G Gribble, T Inch and M Squires

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillor J McInnes

* 105

Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children's Scrutiny Budget Committee held on 21 January 2019 and the Children's Scrutiny Committee held on 21 January 2019 be signed as a correct record.

* 106

Matter of Urgency: School funding issues - Kingsbridge Community College

(An item taken under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.)

The Chair had decided that at the request of Councillor Brazil the Committee should consider this item as a matter of urgency because of concerns raised by Kingsbridge Community College in a letter sent to Parents/Carers dated March 2019.

The letter had been circulated to the Committee in advance of this meeting and set out the School's current concerns relating to:

- school budgets which had been reduced in real terms by 8% and by 20% at post-16;
- class sizes were rising and the curricular offered was being restricted;
- schools were being asked to support with children's emotional health and wellbeing, without adequate resources; and
- the most vulnerable students in school – those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - were bearing the brunt of cuts and schools were struggling to provide the levels of support they were entitled to.

Kingsbridge Community College had written to the Secretary of State for Education on three separate occasions since September 2018 to request a meeting with representative headteachers, but such a meeting had been declined.

The letter stated there was a 'Worth Less' campaign group that comprised 64 local authorities, covering thousands of schools and millions of families, giving a clear indication of the levels of concern felt by reasonable and moderate headteachers in England.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services reported that the Council were doing a lot of work in the background under the f40 campaign and that every school in Devon had been contacted asking for case studies that could be used.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Brazil, **SECONDED** by Councillor Biederman and

RESOLVED that Cabinet be asked to write to the Secretary of State for Education requesting that he meet with Headteachers not only in Devon, but across the whole country, concerning the current school funding crisis and the impact it was having on schools, children and families.

* **107** **Public Participation**

There were no oral representations received at the meeting from a member of the public.

* **108** **SEND Inspection update**

(Councillor Biederman declared a personal interest in this item by virtue of having a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

(Councillor McInnes attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee)

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Education and Learning (CS/19/09) which provided a Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection update.

The focus of the Local Area SEND Inspection was concentrated on three key areas, namely the effectiveness of the local area in *identifying, assessing the needs of, and improving outcomes* for children and young people who had special educational needs and/or disabilities.

A joint inspection was conducted by Ofsted and CQC in December 2018 and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector had determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required to address the four areas requiring improvement, namely:

- that strategic plans and the local area's SEND arrangements were not embedded or widely understood by stakeholders, including schools, settings, staff and parents and carers;
- the significant concerns that were reported about communication with key stakeholders, particularly with parents and families;
- the time taken to issue Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and the variable quality of these plans; and
- weaknesses in the identification, assessment, diagnosis and support of those children and young people with autism spectrum disorder.

The draft WSoA would be shared with parents, schools and other stakeholders shortly. Actions that would lead to improvements were already underway and Inspectors would return within 18 months to assess progress and impact of the improvement programme.

Work was taking place to improve how people with autism were supported across Devon and to enhance provision and practice across all educational settings, schools in Devon had completed the Devon Enhanced Autism Programme of training.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Committee commended the hard work of all staff involved.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Biederman, **SECONDED** by Councillor Hannaford and

RESOLVED

- (a) that the findings of Devon's Local Area SEND Inspection and the requirement for the local area to produce a Written Statement of Action within 70 days be noted;

- (b) that the Inspection was of the area and not the Local Authority be noted;
- (c) that the actions already taken or in progress by the local area be noted;
- (d) that a Task Group be set up to inform and dovetail with the work in response to the findings of the Inspection, including transitions from children's services to adults' services;
- (e) that the Chief Officer for Children's Services be asked to consider writing to all parents/ carers of children currently going through the EHCP assessment process, as well as to those who already have an EHCP, outlining the proposed improvements detailed in the draft Written Statement of Action; and
- (f) that a Masterclass be set up to further Members' understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

* **109** **SEN Annual Report**

The Committee received the Children with Special Educational Needs Education Annual Report 2017/18.

Part A covered all children and young people with a statutory plan maintained by Devon including those placed out of Devon County, and Part B provided information on pupils with Special Educational Needs attending Devon schools regardless of which local authority maintained the EHCP.

The Report highlighted in particular:

- under Part A, local data indicated that as of January 2019 the number of pupils with an EHCP maintained by Devon had increased to 5,162, an increase of 26% on the previous year;
- the number of children with statutory plans moving out of mainstream had reduced significantly in 2017, especially in the secondary sector;
- as a percentage of SEN plans issued, the SEN appeals had decreased from 13.8% to 6.3%;
- the number of pupils with SEN who had been permanently excluded had fallen significantly in the last year, reducing from 0.50% in 2016/17 to 0.19% in 2017/18 and was currently 0.09%; and
- Elective Home Education had risen over the academic year, although the percentage with an EHCP had remained stable at 4.5%.

* **110** **Education and Learning Q3 Performance Report**

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Education and Learning (CS/19/07) on the latest performance measures, highlighting key areas including: Early Years, Children in Care, requests for Statutory Assessments, transfers from statements, rates of Elective Home Education, rates of absence, Parental Responsibility and Penalty Notices and Ofsted outcomes.

The Report highlighted:

- the take up of funding for two year olds had increased in the Autumn term 2018 to 91%, which was slightly lower than the same period last year (93%);
- outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those on free school meals had seen a decrease this year and this along with lower progress figures for all pupils was a significant concern, however, work was being undertaken to better understand this;

- Devon pupils whose first language was not English were performing in line with or better than nationally; and
- the percentage of young people who were NEET in Devon was slightly higher than the same period last year.

* **111** **Self-Assessment and Evaluation and the Ofsted Annual Engagement Meeting**

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Children's Social Care (CS/19/06) covering the Self-Assessment and Evaluation and the Ofsted Annual Engagement meeting in Appendices 1 and 2.

Children's Services complete a self-assessment each year as part of the Sector-Led Improvement programme put in place by the South West Region Association of Directors of Children's Services.

Ofsted introduced a new framework for the inspection of local authority children's services in January 2018 that required children's social care services to produce a self-evaluation of social work practice in advance of the Annual Conversation with Ofsted.

A Regional Peer Challenge took place in December 2018 in which Devon's self-assessment was challenged by colleagues from Bristol, which identified areas of strength and areas for development, as set out in the Report.

* **112** **Self Harm and Young People**

The Committee received the report produced by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Commissioner for NEW Devon and SDT CCG on self-harm which set out the National and International Context, Local data and Recommendations and Next steps.

Officers from South Devon and Torbay CCG and NEW Devon CCG presented the report.

The Report highlighted:

- that self-harm may be an indicator of a range of serious problems including mental health, dysfunctional family relationships, substance misuse, bullying and physical and sexual abuse and was an expression of underlying emotional distress;
- rates of self-harm had increased over the past decade in the UK and were amongst the highest in Europe;
- a national review of evidence around the impact of social media on children and young people's mental health was being conducted;
- self-harm admission rates across Devon were higher than the England average; and
- numbers of children and young people who were self-harming by poisoning seemed to be increased, with paracetamol being the main source of poisoning.

Members welcomed:

- further work through a joint standing overview group with Health and Adult Care Scrutiny; and
- CCGs' offer of mental health first aid and/or awareness training for Members.

* **113** **Children & Young People's Plan 2019 - 2022**

The Committee considered the Report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services (CS/19/11) and the presentation on the Children's and Young People Plan 2019-2022. The Plan's priorities to 2023 included Life Chances, Healthy and Well, Feel Safe and Protect from Harm.

The Devon Children and Families Partnership website would be used to share the Plan and other forms of media e.g. videos, to communicate the shared vision for children and their families. Briefings would be provided for staff across Devon using existing infrastructures.

The Chief Officer for Children's Services undertook to re-circulate the Plan and to organise a further Member briefing session, which would allow Members to influence the Plan before it was approved by Cabinet.

* 114

Children's Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

RESOLVED that the current Work Programme be approved subject to inclusion of the following topics for future consideration and also those agreed at the meeting:

- Youth Services
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) - Masterclass

[NB: The Scrutiny Work Programme was available on the Council's website at <https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/committeemeetings/scrutinycommittees/scrutinyworkprogramme/> and the Council/Cabinet Forward Plan is available at <http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=133&RD=0&bcr=1>]

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 6.00 pm