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## CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Committee** CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time of Meeting** TUESDAY, 12 JUNE 2018, 4.30 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact [scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk)

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Date 14 June 2018

My Ref SS/CYP/AH

Councillor Graham Hinchey  
Cabinet Member for Children and Families  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Graham

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank you, Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities, and Irfan Alam, Assistant Director Children's Services for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 12 June 2018 to present the **Children's Services Quarter Four Performance report** and **Directorate Delivery Plan**.

The Committee have asked that I pass on their sincere thanks and appreciation for the open and honest approach taken to discussing performance issues and the need to establish a new style and approach to performance reports and performance management. Members found it refreshing to have senior officers highlighting areas that would benefit from further investigation. We look forward to working with you and officers to develop a meaningful suite of indicators to enable effective performance monitoring of key areas and I hope that we can have a meeting soon to discuss this further.

Concerning the areas discussed at the meeting, Members have asked that I pass on the following comments.

### **Quarter Four Performance report**

#### Early Help & Preventative Services

Members were pleased to hear Sarah McGill highlighting the need to understand what happens to the 80% of referrals that do not result in Children's Services intervention, and whether these cases are referred to other providers of preventative services. Members believe that this area is critical in determining positive outcomes for children and managing demand for Children's Services. We need to think carefully about appropriate measures that capture the effectiveness of preventative services and this is an area we would like to discuss more with you via our performance panel. We would welcome data showing referral rates in the Core Cities, so that we know how the situation in Cardiff compares to these cities. We would also welcome a couple of illustrative case studies about referrals, as discussed at the meeting.

### Looked After Children

Members note the overall increase in the number of looked after children in Cardiff and that, whilst this follows the trend across Wales, some Core Cities show a reduction in the number of children who are looked after. Members note that officers will be investigating the approaches taken in other Core Cities and we would welcome more information on the approaches taken in Manchester and Birmingham. Members also think it would be useful to understand why numbers have plateaued in Bristol.

With regard to fostering, Members note the ratio between the different types of providers and the consequent cost differences. Members note your comment that early signs are that in-house fostering provision seems better quality and that currently, Cardiff has the lowest percentage of in-house foster provision in Wales, and that there is therefore a project underway to boost in-house provision in Cardiff. Members recognise that to achieve this, there will need to be effective marketing and effective support for foster carers at every stage of their journey. At the meeting, Councillor Mike Phillips reaffirmed his offer to meet with officers to share his experience of developing effective marketing strategies; please get in touch with him directly if you wish to take up his offer.

Increasing the number of in-house foster carers would help to address Out of County placements, along with increased residential provision. Members were interested to hear your comments about additional residential provision being made available and appreciate you could not go into more details in a public meeting. However, Members would welcome more details on the additional residential homes already provided and planned and ask that this be emailed directly to Members of the Committee, who will treat it as confidential information.

Members note that you will provide an action plan as part of Cabinet's response to our Inquiry into Out of County Placements. We look forward to receiving this and ask that this include clear measures to enable effective monitoring of its' implementation.

Finally, as raised at the meeting, Members remain concerned about educational provision for looked after children placed out of county. I have raised this at the joint scrutiny of the Education Consortium and I am pleased that you have also raised this with your colleagues in the region. It is critical that children placed out of county have appropriate education provided for them.

As part of performance monitoring, Members would welcome an indicator that captures the conversion rate from initial enquiry to becoming a Cardiff Council foster carer.

### Social Worker Vacancies

It is disappointing to see that the level of vacancies remains at 24%, albeit that this masks a more complicated picture of improved retention levels and new posts not yet filled. Members agree with Sarah that it would help to have more nuanced information available regarding vacancies, including grades and length of vacancy, and ask that this be made available for future performance reports.

Members note that a recruitment strategy is being developed that will learn lessons from successful strategies used elsewhere, including the Core Cities if appropriate. Members note Ifan Alam's comment that the recruitment problem mainly focuses on Child Protection roles and that this is an issue across the country and involves tackling the concerns social workers have about undertaking these roles; we are interested in receiving more information on how this can be tackled successfully.

### Complaints and Members Enquiries

It was useful to see information regarding the complaints received and Members agree with Sarah's comment that more work may be needed to understand when a request for service might also count as a complaint. Members also note that more work is being undertaken to understand the delays in Stage 2 complaints being completed within timescale. We would be interested in receiving the findings of this work, when available.

### MASH

Members note Ifan Alam's statement that the MASH has led to better safeguarding in Cardiff, improving the ease of conversations across statutory partners and those working with the MASH. Members recognise that this has led to an increase in recorded demand, which was expected and is to be welcomed in that it means potential cases are more visible and can be acted on. Members note that the Delivery plan contains actions for an internal review and an independent review of the MASH in 2018/19; Members ask to be kept informed of the findings, actions and recommendations resulting from these reviews, as available.

### Homelessness

At the meeting, we asked about the 21% of care leavers aged 16-24 years old who had experienced homelessness in the last year. Members note the answer provided, that this figure includes care leavers living in temporary accommodation whilst undergoing tenancy training/ life skills training courses. Members would like more detailed information on this indicator, please, as follows:

- The number of care leavers aged 16-24 years old who were counted as experiencing homelessness in 2017/18
- Of the above number, the number who were:
  - o in temporary accommodation undergoing tenancy training/ life skills training
  - o in temporary accommodation but not undergoing the above training
  - o not in temporary accommodation, broken down into available categories of homelessness e.g. hostels/ sleeping rough/ sofa surfing etc.

Members are also interested in officers' views as to what would be a better measure than the one currently used.

Overall, Members noted that the performance information provided in the appendices to our report showed declining performance, both against target and when compared to 2016/17, in the majority of indicators. This is obviously of concern to us and we shall keep a close eye on performance and the effectiveness of management actions to address under-performance.

### **Directorate Delivery Plan.**

Overall, Members are content with the Children's Services sections of the Directorate Delivery plan and can see how the actions support delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities. However, Members feel that the workforce section could be expanded to not only record the existing workforce but to set out the type of workforce we wish to create. This would help to demonstrate planning for a sustainable workforce and would fit with the discussions held earlier in the meeting about the need for an effective recruitment and retention strategy.

At the meeting, we largely focused on the last two slides of your presentation, on the key principles underpinning the shift in culture required to effect the needed step-change in Children's Services and on the partnership work underway to improve outcomes for children in Cardiff. Members would very much like to accept your offer to circulate the action plan outlining the work to improve outcomes for children and the specific project plans for projects such as the Early Help project. These will help us to link the work we know Cardiff Council is undertaking, with the work of partners, and this will help us when developing our work programme. We are very keen to receive available progress reports on the implementation of the action plan and projects, so that we can keep an eye of the delivery of these.

Thank you again for attending our meeting and being open to discussing a more productive way forward. We feel that the meeting was a good start to help this and look forward to this continuing under the new Director of Social Services, with Sarah McGill as the Corporate Director.

This letter requires a response, please, as it contains several requests for further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', written over a light grey rectangular background.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**  
**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: Sarah McGill – Corporate Director, People & Communities  
Jo Watkins – Cabinet Business Manger  
Irfan Alam – Assistant Director for Children's Services



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Date 20 June 2018

My Ref SS/CYP/NN

Councillor Sarah Merry  
Cabinet Member Education, Employment & Skills  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 12 June 2018 for consideration of the Education Quarter 4 Performance report and Directorate Delivery Plan. Would you please also pass on the Committee's thanks to Nick Batchelar for supporting the scrutiny. Members agreed that this was a particularly useful opportunity for the Committee to identify issues that merit consideration as it develops its work programme for 2018/19 over the summer. They have asked that, as Chair, I pass on the following observations captured during the Way Forward for your consideration.

#### **Quarter 4 2017/18 - Performance report**

The Committee was interested to hear that Estyn are proposing changes to how they inspect Local Education Authorities, with the intention of shifting the focus of performance measurement to strengthening internal review mechanisms. As significant stakeholders in any new proposals, the Committee would like to be involved in the review, and will therefore be requesting a briefing on the proposed changes to performance indicators.

Members noted how the organisation is preparing to deal with the staffing requirements of new schools and the need for highly skilled and motivated staff. The Committee was reassured that a variety of programmes is in place to address Leadership training, and the training of new recruits, with the Teach First programme. As such, we would be interested to know the numbers of Head Teachers that are currently undertaking the leadership qualification.

We are concerned that there appears to be a training gap in the Consortium's approach to the training of Teaching Assistants. We note there are specific budgets for Welsh medium and faith leadership training. Of concern is your indication that Welsh Medium recruitment can sometimes be an issue for the service.

The Committee reflected on the APSE report on Sickness Absence, commissioned by the Council, which had revealed that Teaching Assistants and non-teaching staff are the groups within the Education service with the highest sickness absence levels. Members considered there had been a notable improvement in the Council's reporting of sickness absence statistics to governing bodies. However they are of the view that the information provided to governors around the Council's sickness absence policy is insufficient for governors to take action in dealing with the sickness. They would therefore encourage you to share the policy structure that will facilitate them in dealing with the information.

Referring to schools with a budget deficit, the Committee is seeking reassurance that the Council is open and honest about those schools still of concern. We note primary schools are of more concern, but that there has been no increase in the numbers of primaries in deficit. We were also keen to establish how many of the schools recently out of Estyn special measures have reversed their budget deficits. We would be grateful for this information, as it was not answered specifically at Committee.

We have noted your intention to take proposals for increased provision of Additional Learning Need support to Cabinet for consideration in July, and will programme time for pre-decision scrutiny at our July Committee.

At a strategic level, we note the Director's concern at the increased demand for school places generally, and the Directorate's capacity to deliver the new curriculum for Wales. Given the projected increase in the size of Cardiff's population, we are interested in work underway to plan for this.

In summary, we note that, where new schools have been built, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of applications. Also that an increase in staff turnover at these schools will assist in ensuring good staff are in place. However, going forward there is a significant volume of information in which the Committee is interested: Population projections; number of school places; whether provision is where the need is; the cost of



appeals; the cost of transport the well-being-mental health of pupils. All these issues we will therefore be adding this to our work programme for 2018/19.

### **Directorate Delivery Plan.**

The Committee notes the Directors view that the Directorate Delivery Plan embraces the Cardiff commitment, but is work in progress; a tool for clearly identifying the senior officer leading on an issue, whilst acknowledging that some service heads are better than others at documenting and planning. We acknowledge the Directors view that some adjustments are required to the Directorate's management structure and there will be a management review to deliver current year savings.

Members are keen to establish how frequently the Directorate reviews the milestones within the Plan. We take on board the Directors view that there are too many performance indicators for which it can be difficult to establish milestones. However, we consider the time is right to challenge the indicators.

In considering our work programme, we will factor in your observations of the significant challenges you face in addressing Corporate Plan priorities in 2018/19. Notably, closing the attainment gap; school places, particularly in respect of travel between areas; the need to improve results in the west of the City; and the inconsistency of provision across the City. We particularly note the Council needs to set out an ambitious strategy for the longer term, to 2025.

During the Way Forward Members agreed that the Committees future work programme should also include consideration of schools governance, particularly the position in respect of school governor vacancies, and the need for more school based governor training, rather than County Hall based. In addition, we have identified a number of areas that will require focus, namely early intervention and prevention, Action for Children, and childcare vouchers.

The Committee considers pupil mental health & well-being is important, and there should be a specific performance indicator to measure progress. Going forward this matter will remain in its sights, and under consideration for the forthcoming work programme. We are minded to explore further the possibility of a task and finish inquiry into the Council's CAMHS mental health support service.

Finally, the Director referred to the challenge of addressing Cardiff's position within a national programme designed to deliver education for the whole of Wales. Members would like you to elaborate on this please.

Once again thank you for attending the meeting, and for your honesty in identifying the challenges ahead. We have a useful foundation for our work programming. I would be grateful if you could highlight any additional issues you feel should be explored in developing our forward programme.

I look forward to your response, and the additional information requested.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', written over a light grey rectangular background.

**COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**  
**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: Nick Batchelor – Director, Education & Lifelong Learning  
Jo Watkins – Cabinet Business Manger  
Melanie Jackson – Cabinet Support Officer