

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 MARCH 2019

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson),  
Councillors Cunnah, De'Ath, Philippa Hill-John, Joyce, Taylor and  
Singh

Co-opted Members: Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic representative),  
Carol Cobert (Church in Wales representative), Rebecca Crump  
(Parent Governor Representative) and Karen Dell'Armi (Parent  
Governor Representative)

Yasmin Bahary (Cardiff Youth Council)

### 78 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Phillips and Morgan.

### 79 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Lee Bridgeman and Heather Joyce declared a personal interest in respect of Item 6 on the basis that they are Ward Councillors.

### 80 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on the 18 February 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

### 81 : CHILDREN'S SERVICES QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chair welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member, Children and Families, and Deborah Driffield (Assistant Director, Children's Services) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Hinchey to make a statement. The report is a warts and all account of the current position, which highlights the need for huge progress still to be made, but advised that 90% of Local Authorities are showing an overspend in this area.

Members of the Committee were provided with [presentation](#). Performance information was provided in relation to relevant Key Performance Indicators, Strategic Priorities, Well-being Assessments, the Child Protection Register, Case Reviews, Looked After Children and the Workforce.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions were summarised as follows:

- The Committee welcomed the transparency of the information contained in the report.

- Members referred to the continued overspend and requested reassurance that the trend will change in the coming years. The Cabinet Member advised that investment is taking place in Social Services, £5.6m of the £7.2m invested in Social Services last year went to Children's Services. It was explained that much of the investment was used to change working practices, for example assessments. More work has to be done to insure that funding is being used more efficiently.
- Members noted that the £2m projected savings from last year were unachieved and queried whether the position is likely to be the same this year. Members were advised that Cardiff was an outlier in its reliance on the private sector, and are, quite significantly, the lowest performing in respect of kinship care. Both positions are unacceptable but will take time to resolve. It was noted that there was also an overreliance on agency staff.
- Members referred to sickness absence levels and the low percentage of return to work interviews completed and completed personal reviews. Members were advised that Children's Services were the only part of the Council meeting sickness level targets, and advised that the figures referred to would be considered further, to establish whether they are just a snap shot. When personal reviews were introduced the completion level was considerably less, but the figure has now doubled.
- Members discussed the reliance on agency staff and the framework agreement that is currently in place and relates to payment rates for staff. Members were advised that a review of that framework is currently taken place. Members queried whether there would be any benefit to Cardiff creating its own agency. Some years ago a review took place, most local authorities were prepared to sign up to an agreement however, some refused on the basis that they paid much more in order to keep the staff they had. It is something that needs to be reviewed nationally.

Members queried whether Wales could offer similar bursaries to offered in England to help with the recruitment of Social Workers, and were advised that that would have to be a Social Care Wales initiative but currently 12 secondments to go to university have been offered on the basis that staff will remain with the authority.

- Members referred to previous comments made about the capturing of information, particularly from exit interviews, when the retention of staff has been discussed. The Assistant Director advised that staff are not under any obligation to attend an exit interview. Whilst information about the reason for leaving is collected, the account provided is not always accurate.
- Members asked about the level of caseloads in the authority and where those levels sit in comparison to other authorities. It was

noted that the average case load is 15 cases, however, every case is different. A workload management system does need to be introduced. Managers should be aware of the nature of the case load and workload management should be carried out every 4 to 6 weeks.

- Members noted that the recruitment of social workers is difficult across the country but that progress in Cardiff was slow but steady, there is a recruitment plan and weekly meetings take place. There was a meeting recently with the current final year students, 15 of them and they were all positive about their futures. Interviews are being arranged as quickly as possible, appointments are being made as social work assistants until they receive their registration.

It was explained to Members that the vacancy target for Social Works has been changed, and the Corporate plan amended accordingly.

- Members discussed the impact of rotating staff within teams to try and avoid 'burn out' in staff and were advised that the rotation of staff within teams is not yet in place, however, it is one of the proposals being considered within the Early Help and Intake and Assessment team.
- Members asked for an update on the review of the MASH and were advised that the MASH and the Intake and Assessment Team would be merged prior to a larger restructuring. The Assistant Director will also be chairing a multi-agency meeting to take that forward and a new manager has been identified.
- Members requested information about the Chastisement Bill and were advised that the impact the bill will have is not currently known but it is something that will have to be dealt with. The Cabinet Member indicated that 47% of calls to the MASH were from the police, it is understood that there will be some retraining as to what is being reported by the Police.

AGREED: That the Chair writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

## 82 : CARDIFF'S SCHOOLS CATEGORISATION REPORT 2019

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member, Education, Employment and Skills, and Nick Batchelar (Director, Education and Lifelong Learning) and Michele Duddridge Hossain (Operational Manager, School Organisational Planning) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry to make a statement in which she referred to the aspiration that all schools are in the green category. The new arrangements will be robust, coherent and transparent; we are still struggling with what some of the new measures will mean in practice.

The Director referred to the comment that 72.3% of all Cardiff schools inspected by Estyn, during the seven-year inspection cycle ending as at the last academic year, were judged to be Good or Excellent for Standards or Current Performance, but stated that all schools should be good or excellent and advised that annual inspection results by sector can be misleading when turning percentages into numbers.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions were summarised as follows:

- Members discussed the role of Challenge Advisors and the importance of providing feedback. It is important that Challenge Advisors understand that they are part of a wider team ensuring better education in Cardiff. School improvement cannot be considered without considering the wider context.
- Members discussed the review of the consortium arrangements which is due to be reported back to Committee before Easter, looking at role distinction, respective roles and what the future of the consortium should look like. Members raised concerns about there being an overlap in duties; a need for more clarity in responsibility and general quality of service; the importance of it serving the needs of Cardiff; regional tensions
- Members noted that the future improvement in education does require development of the workforce – teachers who are able to teach differently and leaders who have the right skills. School to school linking has positive benefits, and being part of regional arrangements does mean a large pool to draw from. It does help to prepare schools to taken on the ALN changes on a regional basis.

AGREED: That the Chair writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

#### 83 : NEW SCHOOL PROVISION TO SERVE PARTS OF PONTPRENNAU AND OLD ST MELLONS

*Councillors Bridgeman and Joyce reiterated their personal interest in this item on the basis that they are local Ward Councillors.*

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member, Education, Employment and Skills, and Nick Batchelar (Director, Education and Lifelong Learning) and Michele Duddridge Hossain (Operational Manager, School Organisational Planning) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry to make a statement in which she outlined the link between schools in the area; whilst there had been consultation previously about closing Glan yr Afon Primary School, it had now been decided that pupil numbers would be reduced rather than closing the school altogether. The intention is to relocate St Mellons Primary School on to the St Edeyrns site and enlarge it; to expand to one form entry rather than a .5 form entry as it is currently. As it will be located within the new housing development, there will be a Section 106 contribution.

Members of the Committee were provided with a briefing by the Director. It is anticipated that there will be a potential federation between Glan yr Afon Primary School and another school, although this has not yet been confirmed. The intention is to develop the early years and family support provision on the Glan yr Afon site; Flying Start are currently based there. One of the potential barriers to that is the fact that part of the building cannot be used because of an underground oil spill that has come to light which will require consideration and some investment in the future.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions were summarised as follows:

- Members queried the increase to a one form entry and whether there is the demand for that and were advised that it is expected that it will be full in time, at the moment the housing development has not been completed. The school will be moved back to its designated area, and over time the area from which the pupils attend from will change. Whilst initially it will be a one form entry the school will be designed with a view to it being able to accommodate two form entry numbers.

AGREED: That the Chair writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

#### 84 : SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2020-2021

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member, Education, Employment and Skills, and Nick Batchelar (Director, Education and Lifelong Learning) and Michele Duddridge Hossain (Operational Manager, School Organisational Planning) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry to make a statement. This was an annual report to Cabinet, the arrangements go out of consultation every year. It had been recognised previously that there had been a growth in pupil numbers, as a result a review had been undertaken into school admission criteria. Currently a coordinated admission policy is being operated, although three schools in the area are not taking part. It would be in everyone's interest if all schools took part.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions were summarised as follows:

- Members asked about the number of preferences for schools parents enter on the application form. It was noted that parents can put up to 5 preferences, whilst there has been an increase in the number of preferences parents record some are still unrealistic about their choices. The guidance on completion has improved however, it is accepted that there needs to be more support in some areas going forward.
- Members raised the issue of the quality of the Welsh language translation on the online application system and were advised that a lot of work has now been undertaken in to the quality of the

translation in house and it has also been raised with Capita, one of the examples of the changes made is rather than yes or no, ticks and crosses are now being used to avoid confusion.

- Concerns were raised about the consultation method; it is difficult for people to understand precisely what is being consulted upon. The Committee were advised that there is a real challenge in terms of actual alternatives and amendments cannot be made without them having been consulted on. There is always an issue in terms of making the consultation clear and understandable. Members queried whether, particularly if the proposed changes were minor that the changes be highlighted in the consultation separately to enable the public to clearly see the changes.

Members discussed admission numbers, school preference, segregation and the need to review the admission policy. Members noted that parents will make different judgements when applying for school places. There is a need to try and deal with the issues that drive parental anxiety. Catchments areas will have to be considered in due course bearing in mind the expansion of places.

AGREED: That the Chair writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

#### 85 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairman agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

#### 86 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were tabled.

#### 87 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee is on Tuesday 9 April 2019 at 4.30 pm.

The meeting terminated at 7.20 pm