

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 SEPTEMBER 2017

Present: County Councillor Bridgeman(Chairperson)  
County Councillors De'Ath, Philippa Hill-John, Morgan, Murphy,  
Phillips, Taylor and Singh

Co-opted Members: Patricia Arlotte (Roman catholic  
representative) and Carol Cobert (Church in Wales  
representative)

### 11 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Joyce and Karen Dell'Armi.

### 12 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

### 13 : SCHOOL HOLIDAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME - BRIEFING

The Committee received a report on the work of the School Holiday Enrichment Programme 'Food and Fun'. The programme is an innovative way to prevent children from going hungry during the school holidays and to reduce the impacts of poverty and social deprivation.

Members were advised that school holidays sometimes present difficulties for low-income families whose children benefit from free school breakfast and lunches. Some children miss meals during the school holidays. Furthermore, the lack of free play schemes and sports activities impact most on disadvantaged children. Missing meals, a sedentary lifestyle and social isolation in the holidays reinforce existing health inequalities and social isolation and also undermines the success of free school breakfast and lunch policies.

The 'Food and Fun' summer enrichment programme was developed and piloted in Cardiff in 2015 and it was then introduced across more areas of Wales in 2016. The programme is the first UK example of a multi-agency project providing healthy meals, nutrition skills, sports and other physical activities in the school holidays. The aim is to improve children's health and promote learning.

The Chairperson welcomed Sarah Merry, Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills; Nick Batchelar, Director of Education; Katie Palmer, Food Cardiff, Judith Gregory, Education Catering and Emma Hill, Sport Cardiff to the meeting. The Cabinet Member was invited to make a brief statement.

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

- Members asked for clarification on the numbers of children attending the programme and the selection criteria used to allocate places on the programme.

Officers stated that the schools which sign up to the programme are located in areas of high deprivation. Last year 416 children from across 10 schools attended the programme. There was an increase in the numbers attending this year but the finalised figures will not be available until October. Each school will apply their own selection criteria. Children are mainly in KS2 where need is identified.

- The cost per child attending equated to approximately £20 per child per day in Cardiff, which compared to £30 per child per day across Wales. Costings are difficult to calculate because funding was provided by a number of agencies. However, the cost was approximately £8k per school. Members noted that if the number of children attending the programme increased then the cost per child would be reduced accordingly. The largest cost is that of staffing. The child/adult ratio in some schools is optimal and in other schools is not. Therefore, further efficiencies are possible.
- When compared to voluntary schemes such as 'Chomp' which is run by Albany Baptist Church, the voluntary scheme is run by parents and volunteers. They offer a 2-hour programme where children are accompanied by parents/carers and Foodbank Plus delivers a meal to a child.
- Officers advised that schools were able to offer the programme during the Summer recess – either 4 days per week for 3 weeks or 3 days per week for 4 weeks. The programme was offered to 21 schools on 13 different sites.
- Members asked whether consideration had been given to shortening the hours from 0900 hours to 1500 hours so as to minimise the cost of providing the programme. Officers stated that feedback indicated that parents support longer days as shorter turnaround times were more difficult to manage. The longer day also offered more opportunity to vary the activities offered as part of the programme.
- Officers were asked whether any consideration has been given to identifying children at risk from obesity as well as focussing on social deprivation. Members were advised that no consideration has been given to date, but some consideration could be given.

AGREED – that the Chairperson writes on the Committee's behalf to the Cabinet Member to convey their comments and observations.

#### 14 : PROVISIONAL PERFORMANCE OF CARDIFF'S SCHOOLS 2017 AND EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received a verbal update on provisional performance results in Cardiff Schools for 2016/17. The Director of Education also presented the Directorate Performance Report Quarter 1 2017/18 prior to its consideration by the Cabinet on 21 September 2017. Members were advised that the Quarter 1 Performance Report attached as Appendix A to the report provided an update on progress towards the strategy priorities identified in the Directorate's Delivery Plan 2017-19. The Performance Overview for Education and Lifelong Learning was attached at Appendix B.

#### School Performance 2017

The Committee received a brief presentation on the provision performance results. The presentation included data on Foundation Phase outcomes; Key Stage (KS) 2

and Key Stage 3 Core Indicators; Free School Meal (FSM) v Non-FSM outcomes at Foundation, KS2 and KS3; KS4 data; and provisional KS5 data.

The key themes identified in the presentation are summarised as follows:

- Foundation Phase outcomes for Cardiff are above the Consortium average
- FSM v Non-FSM outcomes – 77% of FSM pupils achieved the expected level compared to 91% of Non-FSM
- 89.4% of KS2 achieved the expected level which is in line with the average
- The gap in attainment at KS2 between FSM and Non-FSM attainment was 13%, which is below the Welsh average of 14.3%
- There was a slight fall in Mathematics results at KS3
- KS4 data was calculated under new arrangements. The data provided a new baseline which is not comparable to 2016 data.
- KS4 Level 1 threshold results were below the consortium average. A number of factors affected performance. Members will receive full details in the January 2018 performance report.
- KS5 results were good. Boys out performed girls for the first time.

Members were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information provided. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked whether it was reasonable that year 5 exams were marked differently this year. Officers stated that the exams were marked at the end of a 2-year period of study. Pupils were aware that these exams would be marked differently from the outset.
- Members noted the FSM v Non-FSM data and the additional resources allocated to closing the attainment gap between the two groups. Members asked whether there was any data available beneath FSM that would make closing the attainment gap more difficult, such as children with additional learning needs or ESOL needs. For example, Members suggested that some schools may be better able to close the gap because there were fewer ESOL pupils in attendance. Officers stated that many factors affect attainment and FSM is one of them. Schools are becoming more sophisticated in recognising these issues.
- Officers confirmed that the FSM v Non-FSM attainment data will be available on a school by school basis in the future. From that data it will be possible to assess how effective pupil deprivation grant expenditure has been. The Committee will have an opportunity to probe these issues at the January 2018 meeting.
- Members also requested data on the attainment of pupils who had stopped claiming FSM and further details of the EOTAS improvement plan.

### Quarter 1 Performance Report

The Director of Education presented the Education and Lifelong Learning Quarter 1 2017/18 Performance Report. Referring to the priorities set out in the report, and in particular, the need to improve provision for children and young people with additional learning needs, Members were advised that placements outside of Cardiff

were placing huge pressure on budgets. There was an urgent need to expand provision in within the City.

Priority 4 – Ensuring there are sufficient and high quality school places to meet the population growth in the City – the Director stated that bids for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band B funding were oversubscribed. The Asset Renewal Board has been established and it is working through priorities and budgets for this year to address condition and suitability issues throughout the school estate. Affordability remains a key challenge as there are a large number of schools in the city are in a poor condition. The Director considered that an Asset Renewal Improvement Plan is needed.

Priority 6 – Work with the Central South Consortium to further develop the capacity of the school system to be self-improving – Members were advised that efforts were being made to introduce more consistency across the 4 Welsh consortia. The Director suggested that such policy changes may be of interest to the Committee.

Priority 7 – Build effective partnerships between schools, business, the voluntary sector and wider public services and communities to enrich the school curriculum and strengthen school governance – Members were advised that there have been notable successes against this priority, particularly in terms of Eastern High and the Cardiff West Community High School.

The Chairperson invited comments and questions from Members of the Committee. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked what the challenges are facing Cardiff's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band B submission. The Cabinet Member stated that Cardiff is in significant need of additional school places, the condition of school buildings and improving provision for young people with additional learning needs.
- Members asked officers to comment on the recruitment and retention of Welsh language teachers. The Director advised that as provision continues to expand the need for larger numbers of teachers remains challenging. There are also some challenges in faith schools, particularly in the Catholic sector.
- Members supported the new framework for measuring the performance of looked after children. The Director stated that, whilst it was too early to judge the framework, he welcomed the focus on this group. Consideration is being given to placing pupils in schools using the looked after children admissions lever.
- The development of the Welsh Education Leaders Academy has provided an opportunity for education leaders to learn from each other and share practices. Some headway has been made in introducing a formal approach for aspiring head teachers.
- Members noted that Full Time Exclusions (FTE) were in the 'red' category for the period and this related to one school in particular. Officers were asked to comment. Officers indicated that the FTEs related to two schools in the west of the city which are now closed. The Director stated that, in his view, the over-use of FTEs was counterproductive but there were circumstances where other pupils needed to be protected from bad behaviour.

AGREED – that the Chairperson writes on the Committee’s behalf to the Cabinet Member to convey their comments and observations.

## 15 : SIGNS OF SAFETY - BRIEFING

As part of the Committee’s 2017-18 Work Programme, Members had previously requested a briefing report on the implementation of Signs of Safety in Cardiff Council. Signs of Safety is an integrated framework for Childrens Services which sets out principles for practice; disciplines for practitioners; a range of tools for assessment and planning, decision-making and engaging with children and families; and describes the processes through which the work is undertaken with families and children.

The Committee received a report providing an overview of the Signs of Safety framework and a summary of the three key principles, or columns, used to address key challenges of the work, namely: Working in relationships is paramount; Thinking Critically; and Based on Everyday Experience.

In Cardiff, in response to the challenges facing social work practice, Childrens Services embarked on the implementation of a single risk framework by adopting the Signs of Safety model, which would enable the service to work towards a strategic vision based on prevention and reducing the need for statutory interventions. It was agreed that a project approach would be used to embed the framework across the service. A Project Team was established to work alongside a Signs of Safety consultant and an implementation plan was produced.

Furthermore, a steering group was agreed as a means of developing internal forms and processes to best assist the implementation of Signs of Safety. The steering group membership included staff from across the service.

Members were advised that Signs of Safety is focussed on keeping children and young people safe. Its successful implementation is predicated on a whole service change to social work practice and a commitment to keeping families together by managing and reducing risks. Significant progress had been made but some challenges remain.

The Chairperson welcomed Graham Hinchey, Cabinet Member for Children and Families; Irfan Alam, Assistant Director of Social Services; Jo-Anne Phillips (Project Manager; and Marissa Moon (Team Manager, Intake and Assessment); to the meeting. Following brief statements from the Cabinet Member and the Assistant Director, the officers were invited to deliver a presentation entitled ‘Implementing Signs of Safety in Cardiff Council’.

The Chairperson thanked the officers for their presentation. The Committee was invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked whether Childrens Services involvement with families is brought to an end when cases are closed. Officers confirmed that Children Services involvement is ended but a safety plan is put in place and there was an expectation that stakeholders, such as schools or the family, would report back to

Childrens Services should problems arise.

- The Assistant Director stated that staff within the service are committed to the Signs of Safety approach. Staff are still facing demands and challenges from high caseloads and work to recruit additional social workers into newly established posts was continuing.
- All Social Work Teams were visited and staff were invited to provide examples of who they are trying to face the challenges. A good response was received and those examples were shared across the service area.
- Members supported the service's aspirations but asked for further clarification with regard to how these could be achieved without reducing social workers' caseloads. The Assistant Director stated that growing capacity within the service was critical. It was accepted that more staff and more managers are needed. However, changes to working practices are also necessary, such as providing reflective areas away from the main office. The ultimate aim is to improve practice and reduce the numbers of looked after children.
- Officers advised that Signs of Safety practices are discussed in internal meetings. Feedback from staff has been overwhelmingly positive. Structures are being put in place to support changes and maintain the positive momentum.
- Members sought clarification regarding the legal implications of the changes. The Assistant Director stated that Children Services have engaged with other agencies. Judges are familiar with the Signs of Safety framework and, whilst sceptical, some positive feedback has been received. Members were asked to note that there are some child protection cases where the Signs of Safety approach is not appropriate and the existing procedures will be utilised.
- With regard to the case study referred to in the presentation, Members noted that the child had 13 years of Childrens Services involvement, including the closure of cases, prior this case being closed. Members asked what was different about this closure and was there still a need for ongoing awareness of the case. Officers stated that the case is not closed in the 'traditional' way. A meeting is held and support networks are put in place. If the safety plan is unsuccessful there is an expectation that Childrens Services will be notified.
- Members asked whether there were any plans to revisit previous decisions and apply the signs of safety framework. Officers stated that where children are placed for adoption there is no recourse. Consideration is being given to the establishment of a dedicated team to discharge care orders using the Signs of Safety approach.

The Cabinet Member made a closing statement. The Committee was advised that there is no hiding from the numbers of children being presented. Whilst this presented budgetary difficulties, the best outcome for those children is paramount. Patience will be required before numbers of looked after children are reduced.

AGREED – that the Chairperson writes on the Committee's behalf to the Cabinet Member to convey their comments and observations.

The Committee received the Childrens Service Performance Management report setting out performance data outlining progress against commitments for the quarter ending 30 June 2017. Members were advised that the continued development of the Cardiff Performance Management Framework has brought into line the monitoring and evaluation of progress against the commitments set out in the Corporate Plan and the performance indicators set to assist the overall performance position of the Council. The performance data relating to Children Services was appended to the report.

The report provided an overview of the performance of the service area, including slippage in progress against Corporate Plan objectives.

Members were invited to consider the report and comment, seek clarification or raise questions the information contained within. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- A Member noted the improvement in engagement with faith communities referred to in the report. Officers stated that whilst there had been improvement with faith groups at large, mosques and madrasas were a priority due to the large numbers of children attending.
- Members asked whether there were any plans to recruit social workers from BAME communities. Officers indicated that the recruitment drive was seeking social workers from all backgrounds. An adoption/fostering event aimed at attracting foster carers from BAME communities would be held in the near future.
- Officers were asked to explain what budget monitoring was in place. Officers stated that it is difficult to manage anticipated spend. Decisions to accommodate children at risk are taken at Operational Manager level. During a recent review of 40 cases, everyone case had compelling reasons why the child should be accommodated. Children need safeguarding, but alternatives will be explored. Cases where children are protected are success stories.

AGREED – that the Chairperson writes on the Committee’s behalf to the Cabinet Member to convey their comments and observations.

## 17 : WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the Work Programme 2017-18 for approval. The Principal Scrutiny Officer advised that the Work Programme 2017-18 was reviewed at the July meeting of the Committee and the resulting items were included on the calendar appended to the report at Appendix A and it provided a balanced programme for the year.

The Principal Scrutiny Officer invited expressions of interest from Members who wished to participate in the ‘Out of County’ and ‘Young People and Drug Dealing’ task and finish groups. Members received a summary of their likely commitments. The Principal Scrutiny Officer agreed to circulate an email inviting volunteers to participate in both Task and Finish Inquiries.

AGREED – That the Committee Work Programme 2017-18 be approved. Members agreed to undertake an inquiry into Out of County placements.

18 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on 10 October 2017.

The meeting terminated at 8.00pm

***This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg***