

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 MARCH 2018

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson), Councillors De'Ath, Philippa Hill-John, Joyce, Morgan, Murphy, Phillips 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)

7 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings which took place on 12 December 2017, 9 January 2018 and 13 February 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

8 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rhys Taylor.

9 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Rebecca Crump declared a personal interest in item 5, as her children attended Roath Park Primary School. Karen Dell'Armi also declared a personal interest in item 5 as she is a Parent Governor Representative

10 : YOUTH SERVICE - VERBAL BRIEFING

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills), Councillor Ashley Lister (Assistant Cabinet Member for Youth Services), Nick Batchelar (Director Education and Lifelong Learning), Simon Morris (Achievement Leader, Youth Support) and James Healan (Team Leader Early Intervention & Prevention) to the meeting.

The Chairperson also welcomed Steve Khaireh from South Riverside Community Development Centre together with Jess Head and Ashanti Rule (members of Llanedeyrn Youth Activity Centre), Ffion Harding (Young Carers Provision) and Sam Evans and Ezra O'Connor (members of Grassroots) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Assistant Cabinet Member to make a statement, in which he highlighted the good progress that has been made in the service, with the Cardiff Youth Service review near completion. He added that staff are completing health checks to ensure there is a good standard of delivery.

The Committee were shown a video on the work of the Youth Service.

Simon Morris (Achievement Leader, Youth Support) and James Healan (Team Leader Early Intervention & Prevention) provided Members with a presentation which covered the following points:

- What does the Youth Service delivery look like in Cardiff?
- How well are we doing?
- What are the challenges?
- What are the opportunities?

As part of the presentation, Members heard reflections from young people on their experience of the service, in which they underlined how important it has been to them, including helping them to learn new skills and gain employment as well as support with mental health issues.

Steve Khaireh also provided information about the Youth Improvement Grant (YIG) work in South Riverside Community Development Centre, in which he explained that the service is part-funded through the YIG. The programme is running very successfully, covering 5 days of the week with over 100 members.

The Chairperson thanked everyone for attending, in particular the young people who took part and shared their experiences of the Youth Service.

AGREED – That the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Members conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the Way Forward.

11 : SCHOOL ADMISSIONS - DRAFT CABINET REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills), Nick Batchelar (Director Education and Lifelong Learning) and Brett Andrewartha (School Organisation Planning Team Manager) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which she outlined the pressure on secondary schools and the need for the oversubscription criteria to be simplified. Following an independent review by Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD) and public consultation on two options (Option A and Option B), the Cabinet is recommended to implement Option A, which is line with current policy.

Nick Batchelar (Director Education and Lifelong Learning) also provided a statement, in which he explained that following consultation, few concerns were raised in respect of proposed changes to the oversubscription criteria for nursery and primary education. However, a number of concerns were raised in respect of secondary education. He advised that in due course Cabinet is to receive a report on revisions to school catchment areas for 2020/21 and that there are three factors which need to be taken into account when looking at this; the admissions criteria; the number of places in a school; and the catchment areas.

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

- Members noted that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken on Option B, but not on Option A. Concerns were raised in relation to Roath Park and Marlborough Primary schools, where there are a high proportion of pupils who live on the edge of the catchment area for Cardiff High

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

School and who do not get a place due to oversubscription. The Cabinet Member explained that any changes won't take effect until 2019, and oversubscription could look different then and that the picture across the whole city needs to be taken into account. Officers explained that the analysis showed that implementing Option B would have a negative impact on four secondary schools, who would not be able to accommodate the number of pupils coming from their linked primary schools. Beyond 2019/20 the impact of this would be exacerbated. Overall, Option A is better for the whole city.

- Members noted that the 79% of respondents who chose Option B will feel that their views have not been listened to, and asked how this will be addressed. The Cabinet Member stated that numerous parents would feel equally strongly about Option A, and that it is important to note that many parents who may be affected by the changes will not have responded to the consultation. It has been given careful thought, and the impact to all schools has been considered.
- Members agreed that a city-wide solution is needed and queried whether it would be more suitable to carry out changes to the criteria after assessing the impact of Band B Schools. The Director explained that whilst there is never a perfect time to make an assessment, the criteria need refreshing and it would be a long time before the outcome of Band B. He added that it is important to consolidate and confirm the admissions process now with a rapidly rising population.
- Members highlighted that the Education report shows improvement across all secondary schools, and asked what could be done to promote schools which are not so popular. Members were informed that Willows and Cathays High have been working closely with primary schools. There has also been work on the application forms to encourage parents to choose more than one school. The Director added that change is already happening, with Eastern High now attracting first choice offers for example, and with new schools that have opened there should be a shift in pupil's choices over the coming year.
- Members noted that whilst there has been an improvement across secondary schools, there will be a lag in terms of better results, and parents look at these when selecting a school. The Director agreed that it takes time for perceptions to change, but Cardiff should be proud of the fact that schools are doing better than the rest of Wales. The Cabinet Member added that exam results don't necessarily reflect the work of the school.

A number of questions were also provided in writing from Members of the Public as detailed below:

- Marlborough Children's Action Group (MCAP) noted that the Council appears to be prioritising the needs of Faith and Welsh Language pupils over those from English medium primary schools. The Cabinet Member said that this was not the case, and that a balanced assessment was made of schools across the city.

- MCAP asked how the Council will address the oversubscription of Cardiff High School, which is disadvantaging pupils from Marlborough and Roath Park Primary Schools. The Cabinet Member explained that the outcome of the pupil's responses to consultation showed that proximity to school is the priority and there are alternative closer secondary schools. Going forward, the catchment areas will be reviewed and secondary schools will be expanded.
- MCAP queried whether Councillors would be willing to talk to current year 5's and 6's in Marlborough and Roath Park primary to discuss first-hand the impact the process is having on them. The Cabinet Member said that she would consider this, but if she did it would be to talk to the pupils from her experiences as a parent.
- The issue of an EIA assessment not having taken place on Option A was again raised.
- It was further queried why Option A was chosen, even though the majority of respondents chose Option B. The Cabinet Member explained that significant concerns were raised regarding Option B that would impact a number of pupils. Also, some parents who would be affected by the proposed changes did not respond to the consultation.
- It was also noted that most of the formal bodies who expressed an opinion opted for Option B and their views were disregarded, to which the Cabinet member replied that every response has been considered and a balanced decision needs to be made. The WISERD report highlighted that there are pros and cons to both options.

AGREED – That the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the Way Forward.

12 : QUARTER 3 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND SCHOOL CATEGORISATIONS

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills), Nick Batchelar (Director Education and Lifelong Learning) and Jackie Turner (Assistant Director Education) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which she highlighted the improving picture across the board, but noted that there are still challenges to address, including reducing the gap in attainment for eFSM pupils, identifying the priority order for the asset maintenance backlog and improving provision and support for those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

Nick Batchelar (Director Education and Lifelong Learning) provided a statement in which he said that the results so far have been positive, but ESTYN reports will continue to be monitored. In terms of challenges, the budget for out-of-county placements is a continuing pressure. He added that consultation took place on proposed changes to ALN provision in January.

Jackie Turner (Assistant Director Education) also made a statement in which she outlined the improvements that have been seen across all schools. In the primary sector, the proportion of schools in the green and yellow categories is higher than the Wales figures. A similar pattern of improvement is seen across secondary schools, with only 1 still categorised as red (although this school is making good progress). Special schools have improved considerably over the past year, with none categorised as red. The report also contains information on regional moderation comparison with other Local Authorities, and Cardiff is doing well overall.

Members were pleased with the report and had no questions.

AGREED – That the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the Way Forward.

13 : QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT - CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Families and Children) and Irfan Alam (Assistant Director, Children's Services) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement, in which he said that whilst there is a high volume of complex work, performance continues to be good which is down to the hard work of staff. One of the continuing pressures is that the number of looked after children is increasing, but the Directorate are looking at early help strategies to address this and that Councils across the UK are dealing with an increase in looked after children who have complex issues.

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

- Members noted that the looked after children caseload rate is higher in Cardiff than in the rest of Wales. The Assistant Director explained that there has been an upward trend, with an increase across Wales and the UK. Cardiff is a larger city than others in Wales and therefore has a higher proportion of looked after children.
- Additional monitoring information was previously requested following the Quarter 2 performance report at the December meeting. Members noted that whilst the new Quarter 3 report is substantial, it is overcomplicated and it is difficult to find all the information that had been requested. The Assistant Director explained that it is difficult to provide comparative data for some areas due to changes introduced last year, however, further changes will be made to the next report.
- Members noted that the percentage of Social Worker vacancies has increased since Quarter 2 and were advised that this is partly down to a reallocation of posts, with some existing staff moving to newly created posts; their substantive posts thus remaining vacant. Members were encouraged that posts are being created, but queried the length of time taken to appoint to the vacant posts. Members also queried whether Social Workers that have been

recruited are being retained. Members were advised that Social Workers have an 8 week notice period but this does vary from authority to authority. Members were also advised that the Council are retaining staff, with some returning after having left previously. Members were advised that it would be a challenge to reduce the notice period in line with other authorities as the authority has a single policy for all staff.

- Members sought clarification of what the resulting cost of agency staff is and were informed that the cost to date is £1,994,000. Comparative data from the last few years can be provided in a future report. Members also requested information to be provided in future on the Social Worker agency market and how these agencies operate.
- Members noted that performance in relation to timeliness of statutory wellbeing assessments decreased in Quarter 3 and were informed that a system is in place to ensure that children are seen in a timely manner. It is a case of prioritising and managing demand. The process is closely scrutinised, and senior managers review performance reports on a weekly basis. Members asked whether the statutory requirements could be re-thought if they are unreachable, but the Assistant Director explained that it is good to have this timescale to ensure they keep on track, and the situation is constantly reviewed.
- Members made reference to the Performance Indicator Targets and noted that there are a number of indicators for which targets are not set. Members pointed out that some of this information should be available e.g. for the number of looked after children and the number of children in out-of-county placements returning to Cardiff, but were informed that it is not appropriate to set targets for certain areas. The Cabinet Member added that the number of looked after children (810) is given in the report and that the task and finish group looking at out-of-county placements will be reported on soon. The Assistant Director explained that annual performance indicator figures will be available in the end of year report. Members suggested that the quarterly information could be reported in a clearer way.
- Members were pleased that the Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC) is having a positive impact and asked whether the capacity could be increased. Members were informed that since ARC went live in April 2017 the capacity has already increased, and they are in the process of recruiting four more support workers, an additional Social Worker and are also looking at recruiting two more respite workers.

AGREED – That the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the Way Forward.

14 : 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.

15 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee is on Tuesday 17 April at 4:30pm.

The meeting terminated at 7.35 pm

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