

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 SEPTEMBER 2018

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

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

20 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Patricia Arlotte.

The Chairman welcomed Chloe Burrage, the Youth Council representative to the meeting and invited her to attend future meetings and sit with Members, so that she can participate in the meeting.

21 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

22 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 12 June and 10 July 2018 and the minutes of the Joint Community & Adult Services and Children & Young People Scrutiny committees held on 4 July 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

23 : PROVISIONAL PERFORMANCE OF CARDIFF'S SCHOOLS 2017 REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and skills), Nick Batchelor (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning), Suzanne Scarlet and Natalie Stork (Performance and Information Management) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Sarah Merry to make a statement in which she noted the continuing issues of results for Looked After Children, but stressed that this is a very small cohort of pupils; similar concerns for EOTAS pupils and Free School Meal Pupils as there had been in previous years, but this was a national issue. Cardiff was performing well compared to some parts of Wales but there was room for improvement and the results were largely positive.

The Director added that a more definitive picture would be available in January. It was noted that the self-improving system established through the consortium was helping performance overall and this needed celebrating whilst still acknowledging that there was more to be done. He added that the picture in Primary schools was strengthening and strong but there was still a need to focus on 'All Learners' especially youngsters who have moved around in the system, are experiencing social factors outside the school or are home schooled etc. He acknowledged that there was a minority of pupils for whom the system is not working and those off role are not

performing well. More information would be included in the Annual Performance Report later in the year.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked what the reasons that children were being educated outside of the mainstream setting. Officers advised that there were a variety of reasons including Special Educational Needs, Electively Home Schooled, those not able to succeed in mainstream settings due to health or social issues and those pupils who are not suited by a curriculum setting and need a more vocational offer.

Members discussed what needs to be done to prevent pupils leaving mainstream settings and officers noted that there needed to be challenge and support available to schools with youngsters at risk of leaving, there also needed to be restorative approaches and mediation, more transparency and vigour in the referrals mechanism and a more detailed look into the processes to ensure there isn't a minority of schools having all the youngsters who are difficult to manage. All agreed there was a role for Governors in this too.

Members noted that 39.5% of Cardiff pupils are moving on to study A Levels and asked how this compared with other authorities. Officers advised that the National rate is 40% so Cardiff was in line.

Members asked what the rest of cohort went on to do and officers advised that they look at destinations in the autumn and then categorise the information, but generally there was a variety of destinations such as college and training. Officers agreed to bring this information back later in the year.

Members referred to children moving schools and noted that some children could be Looked After Children and moving foster care or moving area and requested a breakdown of these figures. Officers agreed to bring this information back to Committee.

Members noted the gender breakdown in the performance figures but asked if there were any other demographic breakdown such as ethnicity available. Officers explained that they do have that information and it would be in the Annual Report in January. There were breakdowns by ethnic group, EAL etc. and each school was profiled by characteristics, the challenge advisors in the consortium then take up any issues with the individual schools.

Members referred to EOTAS pupils and requested more information on who accesses providers and home tutoring, whether there was a lack of providers or whether the capacity was adequate. Officers explained that they were not happy that there were too many youngsters who did not achieve the core results. They considered that the range of providers could be reduced and there could be more assertive gatekeeping over who are used and more dialogue about how they work with the Council. Members considered that there should be more honesty and focus around those who need to use the service.

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

24 : CARDIFF 2020 - 2025 PROPOSALS AND CURRICULUM AND SKILLS BRIEFING

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and skills), Nick Batchelor (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning), Suzanne Scarlet and Natalie Stork (Performance and Information Management) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to make a statement in which he outlined that we were close to 2020 and there was a need to look ahead at aspirations and shared goals and strategies to achieve them. There was also a need to look at what education in Wales should look like in a decade. He explained that this was a partnership document where the Council plays a leadership role, education is a public good and as outlined in the Capital Ambition so much hinges on a good education system. He added that Wales needs a credible currency in education.

Referring to the convention, it was noted that there shouldn't be just teachers, but people from the forefront of universities and businesses for a more informed understanding of issues that will be faced in the future. Officers explained the format and timings for the convention and advised that invitations were due to be sent imminently.

The Chairperson thanked Officers and invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked why there were no parent representatives at the convention and were advised that there would be Governors invited and it was up to the Governing Bodies to decide which Governors attended, unfortunately there was a challenge on numbers being able to attend the convention. Officers agreed that parents needed to be engaged more fully in general.

Members asked how it could be ensured that there was good representation from the professional and business element in Cardiff. Officers advised that as part of the Cardiff Commitment, the Council was committed to bringing partners together to connect growth in the economy and education; invites were being sent via Economic Development and lots of businesses had committed to attend, it was hoped there would be six different growth sectors represented.

Members noted that Church in Wales and Roman Catholic schools were represented and asked if other Faith schools were too. Officers explained that the respective diocese had been involved in the convention but there aren't the same structural connections with other faith schools. The Cabinet Member stated that they are well represented on the SACRE committee which covers all religious groups and that Cardiff and Welsh SACRE would be feeding into the curriculum side of things.

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

25 : CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION
- QUARTER 1 REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Claire Marchant Director of Social Services and Irfan Alam Assistant Director Children's Services to the meeting.

Members were provided with a presentation on Children's Services Quarter One Performance after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked how many places would be available in the five new children's homes. Officers advised that there would be approximately 20 places available for children who are currently in residential placements, some out of county. It was noted that there would be no more than five beds per home. The Director added that they are working on a commissioning strategy for Looked After Children in tandem to look at provision going forward, including provision types, short term/crisis and step down provision towards foster care.

Members referred to the proportionate assessments and asked if it would be worth considering a less restrictive timescale for this group of staff. Officers advised they had tried various options of managing the duty system but due to the volume of referrals there needs to be certain number of staff on at any one time; unless there was reduction in demand the pressures wouldn't change, Early Help Provision will help going forward but won't reduce pressures straight away.

Members asked about staff vacancies and whether exit interviews were conducted to establish why people were leaving. Officers advised that exit interviews are conducted and that most people are leaving due to being burnt out by the pressures of intake and assessment and child protection. It was noted that many people move into different parts of the service where the demand is not so high. Members asked if there was a difference in pay grade for those in the higher pressure roles and were advised there were not.

Members discussed Independent Fostering Agencies IFA's and noted that the foster carers are not paid more than those working with the Council, there needed to be more encouragement to get foster carers to work with the Council and the Council needs to be as effective as a business as the IFA's are. Members noted that historically Cardiff had a poor reputation for fostering and the IFA's capitalised on that and targeted Cardiff. Members noted that there are over 20 providers based in Cardiff. Officers explained the Scottish model whereby fostering has been not for profit provision for 15 years, so there are no organisations who are allowed to operate and make a profit, the Welsh Government are actively looking at this currently. The Chairperson stated that he would like a cross party motion to support this.

Members asked about the numbers of Police referrals and whether this was helpful or whether more training was needed. Officers explained that it was difficult as some referrals don't need to come but they could in the future and also some just need recording. What was needed was a joined up system that both the Council and the Police can access but that would be something for the future.

Members discussed the fostering market Officers explained there needed to be targeted marketing, the offer needed to be clear, there needed to be a business model and the team is committed to respond slickly; it was important that if interest was increased it could be managed.

Members asked what work was being done with other partners to drive intelligent referrals through Adverse Childhood Experiences ACE's. Officers stated that ACE's can add to referrals as the Police prioritise ACE, it was noted that Early Help, resilience and intervention would help but currently there is nowhere else to go.

Members asked what support was offered to adoptive parents. Officers advised that there is an arrangement with the Vale of Glamorgan, Merthyr and RCT adoption collaborative and a specific function for post adoption support. The Director considered that adoption breakdown could be a KPI and that adoptive support through transitions in life needs investment.

Members noted that some people are put off fostering as the interview is so intense, Officers explained that Intake and Assessment needed to be robust as people need to know what is involved.

Members asked if there would be a price cap in relation to partnerships with the Vale of Glamorgan and were advised that fees are being looked at regionally to align fees.

The Chairperson advised that there would be a Task and Finish Group on Mental Health and Wellbeing for young people and asked if Children's Services would be able to offer someone to sit on the group. Officers advised that there would be.

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

26 : WORK PROGRAMME

Members were asked to agree the work programme as set out in the report.

Members were advised that there would be a Task and Finish Group on Child Mental Health and Wellbeing. Volunteers were sought for that group and it was agreed that Councillor Mike Phillips would Chair the group, volunteer Members would be Councillors Murphy, Taylor and co-opted Members would be Rebecca Crump, Karen Dell'Armi and Patricia Arlotte. Members were advised that Councillor Lee Bridgeman would be an expert witness on the Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and agree the work programme.

27 : 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.

28 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of the Children and Young People's scrutiny committee is on Tuesday 9 October 2018 at 4.30 pm.

29 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

The meeting terminated at 6.50 pm

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