

Children & Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children & Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 1st November, 2017.

Present: Cllr Carol Clark (Chairman), Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Paul Weston

Officers: Martin Gray, Diane McConnell, Deborah Merrett, Joanne Mills, Helen Crawford (Children's Services), Peter Mennear, Annette Sotheby (DCE)

Also in attendance: Cllr Ann McCoy (Cabinet Member)

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Tracey Stott, Cllr Di Hewitt, Rhona Bollands

CYP 36/17 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CYP 37/17 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

CYP 38/17 Minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2017 were agreed by Members and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CYP 39/17 Scrutiny Review of SEND - Preparation for Adulthood

Members considered the draft final report - executive summary and draft recommendations including:-

- Preparation for adulthood and Stockton's progress in relation to this
- Support planning, voice of the young person and aspirations
- Education and employment (developing new opportunities)
- Role of the health services

The Cabinet Member highlighted the positive and innovative work of the transition guarantee from school into post-16, and how this would particularly benefit young people with SEND in preparation for adulthood. It was noted that Ofsted had noted the impact of the guarantee and it was hoped they would share it as best practice across other authorities in the interests of young people.

Members felt that the report captured the lengthy discussions held at previous Committee meetings, and there were no additions or amendments to the recommendations.

AGREED – that the final report be approved and forwarded for consideration by Cabinet on 16th November 2017.

CYP Scrutiny Review of the Role of the Council in Education

Members were asked to consider the draft scope and project plan to review the current local authority role in education. The Council's role focussed on four key areas:-

- To provide leadership and partnership
- Championing the vulnerable (support for SEN, LAC and Safeguarding), protecting and ensuring children are well served by the school system.
- School place planning (responding to changes in demographics, patterns and trends, the ability to invest in new school places, keeping children in school, managing attendance, new transfers, managed moves, access process and minimising exclusions).
- Enabling a self-improving system, supporting and challenging local school performance.

The extensive work carried out on exclusion/inclusion policies and procedures to improve educational outcomes was highlighted.

It was highlighted by the Director that although school governance had changed substantially in recent years, and the Council had received significant reductions to the Education Support Grant, it was still important for the Council to undertake a local leadership role as no one else was well placed to do this, as well as undertake the remaining statutory duties.

It was noted that Government policy in recent years was generally that schools should be more independent, however a recent shift had suggested that there may be a greater role of local authorities. There was currently a patchwork of approaches across the region and country.

Stockton had continued to take a proactive role, on the basis that all Stockton children are important to the Borough and the Council, irrespective of the type of provision they attend.

Some Ofsted reports had been critical of Academy Trust provision across the country and it would be key to understand their views on school practice.

It was proposed that the Committee focus on the Council's role in promoting inclusion and championing the needs of the vulnerable.

Members asked why there had been an increase in the number of exclusions and a rise in the number of children receiving home education compared with previous years. It was noted that a recent report had been taken to the Safeguarding Board which included concerns around secondary age pupils not engaging in the curriculum and the subsequent risk of exclusion or prosecution due to non-attendance. There was a lack of alternative education and a need to look at providing different kinds of vocational curriculums.

Members questioned how the local authority would know when children were receiving home education. It was noted that some evidence was required from parents to show that age appropriate education was being taught. An attendance order could be requested to get a child back into mainstream education should there be concerns that their educational needs were not being

met. The local authority could assert more influence when a child had SEND. The Council employed a Higher Level Teaching Assistant for Home Education who could attend households willing to engage.

It was noted that the local authority had minimal legislative power to intervene in relation to Home Education. It was possible to check names with social care, and there were concerns at the number of children being home educated that were from households classed as vulnerable.

It was reported that during inspections Ofsted looked closely at children both on-roll and off-roll, and would investigate the reasons for 'off-rolling' which could be due to exclusion or home education.

Members asked if guidance was given on appropriate home education and whether parents paid for exams. It was noted that support was given to those parents who engage and exams were funded by parents. Members expressed concern around the parents who do not engage and felt this was a growing issue, particularly the number of children who were not known to social services. It was reported that checks are carried out with social care. Children from a traveller background had better attendance at primary than secondary and there was a growing number of children at some sites being home educated which was of concern.

Members expressed concern over the substantial increase in exclusions at some Academy Trusts and wanted to explore the reasons for this.

Members discussed the importance and responsibility of the role of the local authority in education and expressed disappointment at the minimal role it plays in schools. The reduction in the number of councillors on school governing bodies was highlighted, where historically there had been one councillor on each.

The Cabinet Member awaited with interest the report and its recommendations and expressed the need to maintain the good relationships we have with schools in the borough, whether academies or free schools, for the benefit of young people.

AGREED –

- 1) that the review should focus on inclusion and championing the vulnerable
- 2) the review should consider engagement with schools, Academy Trusts, Ofsted and the Regional Schools Commissioner, and what makes an inclusive school
- 3) that the SLSCB Report on Home Education be circulated to the Committee
- 4) details of Councillors that were school governors be circulated.

**CYP
41/17** **Work Programme**

The next meeting to be held on 5th December 2017.

**CYP
42/17** **Chair's Update**

The Chair had nothing further to report.

