Children and Young People Select Committee Overview Meeting 2018

18 April 2018

Report from Director of Children's Services

Context

1. Members are well aware that as a Council we have had to adapt to funding reductions of £68 million over the last seven years and that we are still confronted with having to find further savings.

2. Whilst we acknowledge that we have a strong track record of sound financial management and we have been dealing with these problems successfully for many years, it will not be easy to address the additional loss of government funding of over £6 million by 2019/20. Moving forward, expectations will need to be realistic as many more difficult decisions will need to be made.

3. The challenge for all Members is to ensure that decisions about the basis on which services will be delivered are within the resources available, taking account of a number of factors such as reduced budget allocation, changing demographics, increasing demand, new national legislation and policy direction. Members are reminded of the four policy principles that support our decision-making:

    a. **Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention,** particularly those people in our communities who are subject to, or at risk of harm, people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and those who are financially excluded or whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
    b. **Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention,** specifically in relation to tackling health inequalities, meeting the skills gap and improving access to job opportunities, tackling fuel poverty, improving education and training opportunities, access to affordable housing and financial and digital inclusion.
    c. **Developing strong and healthy communities** through the provision of mainstream and preventive services that are available to all those who choose to access them.
    d. **Creating economic prosperity** across the Borough

4. It is within this context that the Select Committee is invited to undertake their overview duties.

Performance Reporting

5. Performance across the Council Plan has been reported on a six-monthly basis. This was reported to Executive Scrutiny Committee on 30 January, and then forwarded to members of each Select Committee with key issues highlighted by the Chair at their next meeting.

6. In response to the increased expectation on Councils to put in place internal mechanisms to undertake rigorous internal review and challenge, particularly in relation to the quality and safety of health, children's and social care services, Children and Young People, and Adult Social Care and Health Committees receive additional information as part of their work programme (including additional SBC performance data, inspection reports, and information from partners, for example the NHS).

Council Plan 2017-18

7. The Council Plan sets out the aims and objectives for all services and is refreshed on an annual basis.

8. The 2017-18 objectives for the Children and Young People theme are attached at **Appendix 1.**

Children's Services – Director – Martin Gray

9. Relevant services include:

    a. Early Help, Partnership and Planning
    b. Safeguarding and Looked After Children
    c. Schools and SEN

10. This section outlines some of the key achievements in 2017/18 against the priorities in the Council Plan and the Children's Services Strategy, agreed in 2017.

11. In 2017-18, the Council and its partners were inspected by Ofsted and other inspection bodies as part of a Joint Targeted Area Inspection. An action plan as a result must be developed and will be submitted to Ofsted on 15 April 2018. Further references to the more detailed outcomes will be made throughout this report.

The best start in life

12. There continues to be a focus on the uptake of free education for disadvantaged 2 year olds. We have seen a significant increase in take up in 2017/18, with the latest figures indicating a take up rate of.

13. Available childcare places continues to be monitored closely as part of the rollout of the free education entitlement to eligible 3 and 4 year olds from September 2017.

14. Four successful capital bids were submitted to provide additional capacity, and additional funding has been made available to support the expansion of existing provision.

Focusing on schools and learning outcomes

Schools and school places

15. Cabinet agreed a schools investment strategy on 6 October 2016, and received a further report on progress in April 2017.

16. The strategy sets out proposals for the expansion of a number of schools. A total of £37m has been successfully attracted from the Government's Basic Need funding , which sets out proposal to meet the demand for additional secondary school places to 2020 as well as working with schools on a range of improvements to conditions.

17. The challenge remains in Thornaby, and in particular Thornaby Academy where take up of places remains considerable below capacity.

School and settings improvement and performance

18. In terms of early years, 69% of children in Stockton achieved a Good Level of Development (compared to 71% nationally) representing an increase of 4% on 2016 (28% increase since 2013).

19. The proportion of Year 1 children meeting the standard in the phonics screening check has increased year on year since the tests began, but has dipped marginally (less than 1%) in 2017.

20. Comparisons with national outcomes show that the LA has exceeded the national average in all areas for the second year. Also, only 59% of this cohort achieved a Good Level of Development at the end of the EYFS in 2015. Given that 68% achieved the expected standard in all areas at the end of Key Stage 1, this suggests good progress overall.

21. At key stage 2, results present a positive picture in comparison with national averages. However, underlying data indicates that reading continues to be the subject area most responsible for pupils not achieving combined reading, writing and Maths.

22. Individual school outcomes vary widely, but overall both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils have improved outcomes in all areas. The in-LA gap is closing in most subject areas, but the national indicator (which compares LA disadvantaged pupils with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally) is not yet available.

23. At ley stage 4, it is hard to precisely compare results in 2017 with 2016 due to the new measures, grade boundaries have been adjusted to ensure the % of passes stays broadly the same at C/4 and A/7. Most Stockton schools have performed in line with their 2016 results. The percentage of pupils achieving grade 4 + in the new challenging English and maths GCSEs is 62.9% and is broadly in line with 2016 % A*-C English and Maths.

24. The latest data on Ofsted rankings as at end December.

Primary

- % pupils attending a school with Good or Outstanding: 94.2%
- % schools with Good or Outstanding: 94.9%

Secondary

- % pupils attending a school with Good or Outstanding: 92.5%
- % schools with Good or Outstanding: 92.3%

Special Educational Needs

25. 26% of SEN children in Stockton achieved a Good Level of Development in 2017. The gap has reduced slowly over the last 2 years and it is positive to note for the second consecutive year the SEN increase in % GLD is similar to the non-SEN % increase. (The cohort size has remained very similar).

26. Early Years Moving Forward documentation, part of the Stockton Transition Guarantee, has enabled teams across Schools and SEN to facilitate comprehensive

transition between EY settings and schools. This continuity will enable practitioners to share information relating to the children with SEN so no time is lost between settings.

27. At the end of KS1 significantly fewer SEN children in Stockton reach age related expectation than their non-SEN peers however the percentage is above National SEN for all areas except Science. At this key stage, SEN children in Stockton demonstrate   progress that is less than their non-SEN peers but the gaps are considerably narrower than national gaps.

28. At Key Stage 2, although there are still within LA gaps between SEN and Non SEN, these   gaps are lower than the national SEN/ non-SEN gaps in reading, writing and maths (reading -1.4, writing -0.9, maths -1.1).

29. Again the Key stage 2 progress measures indicate that SEN pupils made most progress in maths and least progress in writing. Although this is mirrored nationally for SEN pupils, the LA gap is narrower than national and an improved gap from 2016.

30. At KS4, SEN pupils perform significantly less well than their peers, however, this gap closes slightly (comparing 4+ English and Maths with A*-C English and Maths) in 2017.

Disadvantaged pupils

31. Disadvantaged Pupils are defined as those in receipt of Free School Meals for the last 6 years, children of service personnel, Looked After Children and adopted children subject to Pupil Premium funding.

32. It has been a particular priority for services in Stockton to improve the outcomes for this group of children. Disadvantage was the focus of a recent scrutiny review and the need to improve outcomes, particularly in the early years for this cohort was identified.

33. It is pleasing, therefore, that performance in the early years, and across all phases of education in most measures, has improved in 2016-2017 for disadvantaged pupils.

34. At Key Stage 1 outcomes for disadvantaged children show that the proportion reaching the   expected standard in all three areas has increased by 4% in comparison with 2016.

35. At key Stage 2, 46% of disadvantaged Year 6 children in Stockton achieved Combined Reading, Writing and maths at the expected standard or above in 2017. This is an 11% increase from the previous year.

36. At key Stage 4, attainment of disadvantaged pupils has declined, as has attainment overall, largely due to the new examinations and measures. School level performance varies considerably, with some schools showing very strong performance and others a disappointing drop in performance. The outcomes from one academy, St Patrick's College, have a disproportionate impact on overall figures.

Attendance and exclusion

37. The Committee is undertaking a review looking into fixed term and permanent exclusion as part of its 2017/18 work programme, in response to the significant increase in 2016/17 compared to previous years.

Providing early help and support for families

38. There remains a major focus on early help. A review of processes is being undertaken as part of the Smarter Woking in Stockton programme. The focus of the review is to reinforce the approach to early help in the context of the new 0-19 services, and in particular the establishment of the new network of four family hubs, with the associated delivery points for outreach.

39. There has been a focus in 2017/18 to reduce the number of families with an early help assessment where the assessment and the associated planning has been open for over 12 months. The emphasis has bene on stepping down families to universal services where appropriate, and stepping up to social care assessment where necessary.

40. We continue to work with a number of agencies as part of an 'early help hub' approach – including Citizens Advice Bureau, TEWV, Harbour.

41. The early help problem solving panel meets regularly to discuss and review cases which need additional support, or some advice or challenge.

42. Work continues with Hartlepool BC and the CCCG to deliver the Future in Mind programme – to change the way support for children and young people is delivered. Excellent progress has been made in the delivery of a pilot project in secondary schools, which it is hoped will be rolled out into all primary schools in 2018/19.

Safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children, backed by outstanding social work practice

43. There continues to be demand pressure across children's social care services, with high rates of contacts and referrals, leading to rates of children in need, and in particular rates of children in care which are considerably higher than the national average.

44. The Children's Hub is proving very effective at securing effective partnership involvement and data analysis to support decision making. Levels of contacts into the children's hub remain high, though effective screening in the hub is reducing the number of assessments being undertaken as concerns are signposted back to agencies or to early help services.

45. Performance in relation to statutory timescales for assessments, reviews remains strong but continues to be monitored closely through performance clinics.

46. The arrangements for safeguarding Vulnerable, Exploited Missing and Trafficked children and young people (VEMT) remain strong.

47. There are ongoing issues around the recruitment and retention of experienced social workers, though considerable progress has been made in the recruitment of experienced social workers in 2017/18, resulting in there currently being only 6 vacancies across the social care workforce.

48. Numbers of children with child protection plans has reduced significantly in 2017/18, from a total of 307 to the current total of 240. This reflects remain higher than regional and national averages and remain a focus, although numbers have remained more stable than the picture in some neighbouring authorities.

A consistent and relentless focus on better outcomes for children in our care and leaving our care

49. The number of children in care has continued to increase in 2017/18, though at a reduced rate than in 2016/17.

50. In terms of educational outcomes, in early years, outcomes have decreased though cohorts were very small – 8 pupils

51. There has been a significant increase in Phonics attainment in Year 1. In 2017 67% of children achieved the expected standard in the Phonics Screening Check. This is significantly higher than 2016. The gap narrowed in 2015 but increased in 2016. In 2017 the gap has deceased compared with the national outcome for all children. Overall 67% of the Year 2 Cohort have now met the standard. Key Stage 1 shows a decrease in attainment though remains above the national average in 2016. At Key Stage 2 the cohort size was 31 pupils. 17 pupils (55%) had a special educational need; this is significantly above the national average for all pupils and well above the national average of LACYP 61% in 2016. 9 pupils (29%) have an EHCP and 7 pupils (35%) require 'SEN Support'.

52. At key stage 4 the cohort size was 23. 15 pupils (65%) had a special educational need, this is above the national average for all pupils and above the national average of LACYP (61% in 2016). 11 pupils (47%) have an EHCP and 4 pupils (17%) require SEN Support'.

53. Progression to university is pleasing, with 20 students now undertaking Higher Education courses. 9 students started university in 2016.

54. Preliminary data indicates that attendance and exclusion rates remain very favourable in comparison to national averages.

55. The percentage of care leavers who are in education, employment and training continues to be a focus, with the rate remaining reasonably constant at between 45 and 55% over the year, mirroring national data.

56. There are a number of initiatives are in place to support this work including a specific 'EET Clinic' which examines individual cases and develops specific and customised support plans.

57. Progress on the health of looked after children and young children remains an area of focus. Although the numbers of children who have received a health assessment remains an improving picture there remain some concerns about health outcomes, and in particular around emotional health and wellbeing.

58. There remain challenges in meeting the adoption scorecard measures for timeliness of adoption matches and placements. The most recent child placement update report, considered at the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership in January 2018 includes details on adoption:

Children's adoption Plans

YEAR	Number
2012/13	49
2013/14	27

2014/15	16
2015/16	15
2016/17	28

59. The figure for children with adoption plans remained static between 2014 and 2016, however, this figure has significantly increased during 2016-2017. This is in line with experience within the region.

60. At 31 March 2017 we have 113 mainstream approved foster carers (this has remained static from the previous year)

61. At 31 March 2017 we have 24 approved family and friends carers (this compares to 16 in the previous year)

62. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, 7 mainstream foster carers resigned (compared to 8 during the previous year). 6 foster carers resigned due to a change in their personal circumstances and 1 followed an allegation of physical abuse. Had the resignation not been submitted, it would have been likely that the Agency would have pursued deregistration in that case.

63. No foster carers resigned in order to transfer to another agency, which remains static from the previous year.

64. Between 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017 3 family and friends resigned due to change of circumstance.

65. The Adoption Tees Valley regional adoption agency will commence in the Spring. The new agency, will be hosted by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

66. All of the Council's residential homes are graded 'good' or 'outstanding'. All of the Spark of Genius homes are rated 'good'.

Work collaboratively, effectively and efficiently

67. Work continues to embed the Children's Services Strategy agreed by Cabinet in July 2017, including a range of transformational change projects as well as business improvement actions.

68. Voice of the child continues be a major theme guiding the work of Children's Services. In 2017/18 we have established a new project, Bright Minds, Big Futures as a campaign and initiative to make Stockton-on-Tees a great place to grow up. The Youth Assembly continues to provide a strong voice for children and young people across Stockton-on-Tees.

69. The Let's Take Action Group, part of the Children in Care Council, recently planned and delivered a corporate parenting event at ARC. They also contributed to the regional event which was also held at ARC, in Stockton.

70. Working jointly with Hartlepool Borough Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group, a number of young people have been trained as peer researchers to help support the work underway to transform mental health services for children and young people. They completed a piece of work around the potential use of online materials and apps.

71. We have begun a programme of training in restorative approaches, aimed at developing approaches to the way we work which reduces the need for our involvement, and seeks solutions in families. To support this we launched our family Group Conferencing service in December 2017.

72. As part of the response to the JTAI, we will be placing an enhanced focus on quality of practice, and in particular around planning for children on child in need plans

73. We will be refreshing the Children and Young People Plan in 2018 as the key strategic document driving our work with partners. The emphasis will be on ensuring that the themes of the Bright Minds, Big Futures initiative are used to define and lead work across partners.

74. The S-work project is being developed and implemented – this includes a focus on capacity, skills, services, structures and workspaces.

75. We are also reviewing our approach to children in our care, focusing on the opportunities to reduce the need for children to be in our care – both by focusing on preventative approaches, and on reunification. This work is also focusing on ways of reducing spend on the most expensive out of borough placements.

Challenges

76. The following key challenges have been identified for the consideration of the Committee:

   a. Our schools continue to gradually fill up as our population rises. Although the majority of children are able to get into their first choice of school, this is becoming increasingly difficult in some areas of North Stockton around primary school places and for secondary school places in Billingham. Whilst there has been expansion agreed, and the plans outlined create capacity across the system, there are geographical variations, with some schools being more popular than others.

   b. Our schools perform well overall, but there issues about geographical variations in outcomes, and there are some issues about the gap between those children from poorer backgrounds, those with special educational needs and for children in care where the gap with peers needs to continue to close.

   c. Stockton-on-Tees can expect to receive an Ofsted inspection on our approach to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) by 2021. The Committee's review in this area has resulted in a new approach especially around the older age range.

   d. Early help is not reducing the demand pressure on social care. As the outcomes of our review work are implemented, and there is an increasing shift in our focus to family hubs, we anticipate being able to ensure that more cases are prevented from requiring social care intervention, and can also be stepped down wherever possible and safe.

   e. Compared to national and regional averages, we have high rates of children in the social care system – who have been assessed as having additional needs, or who are subject to child protection concerns or who are in the care of the Council. This creates pressure in terms of placement sufficiency ie finding suitable places for children.

   f. We have high rates of children in care, with a significant increase in 2016/17. Although the rate of increase has slowed in 2017/18 it has continued to rise.

Edge of care proposals are being developed to address some of these issues to provide more intensive support for families to avoid them coming into care.

g. Domestic abuse continues to be a significant contributor to demand pressures.

h. The need for a different model around emotional wellbeing, with a bigger focus on the role of front line professionals, self-service / resilience, and access to support.

i. Recruitment and retention issues for social care are likely to be significant ongoing issues.

Emerging Issues

77. Additional emerging issues also include:

a) The implementation of a new inspection regime in 2018, and the increasing focus on sector led improvement in Children's Services – working with Department for education to identify issue earlier, and preventing the number of authorities with inadequate judgements.

b) The continued national pressure on funding – with the specific focus on the 'care crisis ' – the increasing numbers of care proceedings and the increasing numbers of children in care.

c) The increasing concern about vulnerable pupils and outcomes as a result of being excluded from school.

d) The funding pressures associated with the High Needs Block.

Possible Areas for In Depth Review

78. Topics have recently been sought for the Scrutiny Work Programme 2018-19. Potential topics were considered at Executive Scrutiny Committee on 27 March.

79. The following areas were suggested for consideration as in depth reviews for 2018/19, based on the above analysis and commentary:

a. Working collaboratively, efficiently and effectively – embedding the voice of the child and the child's journey / lived experience – this review could potentially focus on a range of current and potential future approaches.

b. Working effectively with children in need, and how we can improve our approach to demand reduction.

c. Performance and effectiveness in ensuring that care leavers are able to access education, employment and training opportunities.

APPENDIX 1 - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Giving children the best start in life

1. Redesigning the role and focus of children's centres into multi-agency family hubs as part of a 0-19 approach which includes a focus on health and wellbeing, including healthy weight
2. The rollout of 30 hours of free early years education for eligible parents as part of a wider sufficiency strategy
3. More integrated assessment and support in the early years
4. Continuing to ensure that early years provision of a high quality, supports child development and narrows gaps in achievement particularly for those who are disadvantage

Focusing on schools and learning outcomes

1. Ensure sufficient school places in good or better schools
2. Work to ensure all schools/academies in Stockton are good or better through a model for supporting school improvement which focus on school led provision, and a refocused role for the Council, in the context of the Tees Valley Combined Authority
3. Reshaping our services and support for children with special educational needs and disabilities through new hubs a renewed focus on SEND support in schools and joint commissioning
4. Implement a new model for educational psychology
5. Clear options, choices, pathways and support for young people into employment, training or education post 16
6. Develop options for alternative provision and curriculum delivery for 14-19 year olds as risk of disengagement and becoming NEET

Delivering effective early help – supporting families

1. Developing a new outreach befriending service and investing in Safe Families for Children to provide support to families
2. Reshaping family support into a new Family Solutions Service and offer
3. A flexible model of working with young people and families who need more intensive support
4. Continuing to develop a 'secondary prevention' approach to reduce risk in target communities
5. Streamlining systems and processes for early help, working with the Children's hub
6. Continue to prioritise Graded care Profile 2, early help assessment and effective practice as part of a restorative approach
7. Implement the review of services and support for young people

Safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children, backed by outstanding social work practice

1. Rollout of Signs of safety approaches to create better support plans, with greater family engagement
2. Implement restorative approaches, including expanding the use of family group conferencing
3. Introducing and edge of care model to work intensively with young people and families to avoid children having to come into care
4. Ensuring a coordinated and effective approach to reduce the risks associated with children who go missing or are subject to VEMT or PREVENT
5. Refreshing our approach to social work training and skills, and the quality of supervision
6. Tackling key thematic priorities, with an emphasis on domestic abuse, neglect and repeat removals
7. Working to transform support for young people with emotional health and wellbeing needs
8. Redesigning our support for children with complex needs and disabilities
9. Review the operation of the Children's Hub
10. Implement a major change programme for social care focusing on capacity, practice, systems, partnership working and models for delivery (S WORK)

A consistent and relentless focus on better outcomes for children in our care and leaving our care

1. Delivering the strategy for children in, and leaving, our care and our pledge to young people, working as part of the multi-agency partnership (MALAP)
2. Developing an enhanced Care leavers offer to support independence
3. Creative ways of engaging and working with children in care, working with the Let's Take Action Group
4. Improve systems and pathways for sufficiency planning to ensure quality placements for children
5. Develop and test new approaches to increase capacity in fostering
6. Develop a Tees Adoption Agency
7. Implement a refreshed approach to corporate parenting
8. Ensure effective education support through the virtual school
9. Improve health outcomes, based on regular assessment
10. Ensure children in care are listened to, involved and engaged in all aspects of planning and delivery

Work collaboratively, effectively and efficiently

1. Listening to the voice of the child, and those we work with
2. Working restoratively with families, reducing the need for our intervention
3. Ensuring a focus on quality of practice
4. Challenging our own role, being innovative and being an effective partner
5. Using intelligence and evidence to make a bigger impact
6. Being efficient and productive – smarter working and financial sustainability