

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

12 November 2019

Outcomes of the Meetings Between the Children's Select Committee's Chairman and the Executive Members

Purpose of Report

1. This report has been produced to inform the Children's Select Committee of the outcomes from the meetings between the Chairman of the committee and the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills and the Portfolio Holders for Education & SEND, Skills & Social Mobility and Safeguarding.

Background

2. Part of the construction of the forward plan for the overview and scrutiny (OS) committees includes meetings between the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the committees with the relevant executive members and senior officers. These meetings are organised to discuss the current forward plan for the committee and any service priorities that may benefit from OS involvement.
3. The meeting for the Children's Select Committee was held this year on 6 November 2019 to discuss topics within Skills & Social Mobility, Safeguarding and Education & SEND.

Discussions

Skills

4. Transition into Adulthood for care leavers was discussed with regards to what the council provided for care leavers in terms of "real life" skills (e.g. cooking, managing money, getting ready for employment, etc.). It was confirmed that a life skills package was provided by key workers and that further information on this would be brought to the committee (pre-meeting briefing and, if required, report to the meeting).
5. There was also interest in life-skills for all students (e.g. what is provided by schools – both primary and secondary). This should be covered by information on the whole-school improvement programme as these should be part provided to pupils as part of the PHSE (personal, social, and health education) programme.

Social Mobility

6. The Portfolio Holder for Skills & Social Mobility explained that she was starting her work by focusing on the two areas she had currently identified as the most effective places for positive intervention with regards to social mobility:
 - Early life
 - NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training)
7. It was noted that Wiltshire had the highest rate nationally of “not known” (i.e. young people neither “registered” as in education, employment or training nor as NEETS).
8. It was recognised that early intervention and prevention were critical elements in protecting vulnerable children. It was therefore proposed that the committee would keep receiving regular updates on the implementation of FACT (Families And Children's Transformation) during 2019-20.
9. In recognition of the relative “newness” of FACT it was proposed that a deeper scrutiny into the impact and effectiveness of FACT would take place in 12 to 24 months’ time, depending on the information provided to the committee through 2019-20 (*Paragraph 8 above refers*). This would be reviewed at next year’s discussions between the Executive and OS.
10. The need to be clear about the actions taken by the council as well as identify the causes for low social mobility in Wiltshire, to enable the council to know the priorities to address, was discussed. It was however recognised that, due to its services cross-cutting nature, this may be better suited as work for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. It was therefore suggested that a meeting be proposed to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to discuss this with the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) and Cabinet Member(s).

Safeguarding

11. The Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding explained that his current priority was the integration of safeguarding into the council as a whole. He was keen for the committee to receive information on the services currently directly “linked” to safeguarding, as some may be unexpected (such as Taxis as part of a Child Sexual Exploitation prevention measure), as well as the council’s plans to embed safeguarding in everything the council does.
12. It was proposed that a report be brought to the committee in about 6 months, to provide information on what the council does as a whole regarding safeguarding and what it is planning to do, including input from the Safeguarding Board.

Education and SEND

13. Inclusion in school was one of the priorities for the Portfolio Holder for Education & SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), both for SEND and vulnerable pupils. She would like to see inclusion as part of the core offer in schools; for example Makaton being taught (using signs and symbols to help people communicate).
14. It was recognised that there was added pressure on special schools because mainstream schools, both primary and secondary, are not always inclusive enough of SEND pupils. It was also noted that there was a high percentage of LAC (looked after children) attending special schools (37%).
15. This led the discussion to focus on how the council is supporting its most vulnerable pupils. Outcomes for disadvantaged learners had previously been agreed as a rapid scrutiny but full membership had not been reached.
16. It was proposed that Outcomes for Disadvantaged Learners be the topic of a pre-meeting briefing and that, at the same meeting, a report be presented on Outcomes for Disadvantaged Learners in terms of the council's current work and aspirations.
17. The Wiltshire School Improvement Programme was discussed (details of the programme can be accessed [here](#)) and it was proposed that information on progress be presented to the committee at the January meeting, detailing how the Regional Leads are delivering the school improvement programme and the real-life skills as part of the PHSE programme (*paragraph 5 refers*).

CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)

18. The value of the on-going CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) task group was recognised as the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills reported that access to CAMHS was an issue reported to her by the young people she had been meeting.
19. Given the existing task group it was felt that there was no need for further OS work, as the Cabinet Member has the option to bring any concerns reported to her by young people to the attention of the task group.

Housing

20. The Cabinet Member raised the issue of housing for care leavers, in terms of how effective the council was at getting care leavers in the right housing (including availability of choice and location), as an area where she would welcome OS's input.
21. It was proposed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (once one is appointed) of the Children's Select Committee meet with the relevant Director(s) and / or Executive Director and Cabinet Member to explore this further as a potential area of work for OS.

Fostering excellence

22. The recruitment of in-house foster carers was reported as remaining a challenge. One of the consequence was the added pressure on the budget due to external placements.
23. It was proposed to receive information at a pre-meeting briefing on the recruitment of in-house foster carers, if possible including “known issues” and the numbers of in-house foster carers for both Wiltshire and comparator authorities (if these are recorded / reported) compared to demand / need. This would enable the committee to consider where (and whether) OS could add value.

Getting to Outstanding

24. The council’s determination, and on-going work to achieve Outstanding following an Ofsted inspection was discussed.
25. Health outcomes and meeting health needs was identified as one of the more complex areas to address. The reasons for this included:
 - outcomes delivered by partners (not the council) and the possible scrutiny of these by the council;
 - the council not being the lead commissioner on some of these contracts (including CAMHS and Virgin Care, where the CCG is the lead commissioner).
26. It was felt that existing issues were likely to rise with the current move towards commissioning at scale (and increasingly bigger scale).
27. It was proposed for OS to explore how the council can best scrutinise what partners (and providers) are doing to provide health outcomes for Wiltshire children, first by receiving a report on the current scrutiny by the council (including information on the current and planned work on this topic of the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership).
28. In the meantime it was also proposed that the committee receives performance monitoring reports on the overall service (following on from the pre-meeting briefing at the November meeting on the council’s self-assessment process), likely to be June (to consider the year-end data from the previous year) then January meetings.

Youth Grants

29. Each Area Board has Youth Grant funding to support projects that provide positive activities for young people aged 13 to 19 years old and those aged up to 25 years with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
30. The effective use of Youth Grant funding was raised as an issue (having been raised last year at the equivalent meeting) as there did not appear to be a mechanism in place to monitor how (and on what) the money is spent.

31. This would sit with Communities rather than Children's Services and in recognition of the recent appointment of the director for that service it was proposed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (once one has been appointed) meet with the relevant Director and Cabinet Member in February 2020 to explore this as an area for future OS.

Topics proposed for further scrutiny

Pre-meeting briefings

32. Real-life skills package for care leavers (*paragraph 4*).
33. Outcomes for Disadvantaged learners (*paragraph 16*).
34. Recruitment of in-house foster carers (*paragraph 23*).

Agenda items

35. Regular updates on the implementation of FACT (Families And Children's Transformation) during 2019-20. (*paragraph 8*)
36. Safeguarding report (June 2020 meeting) (*paragraph 12*).
37. Outcomes for Disadvantaged Learners (*paragraph 16*)
38. Wiltshire School Improvement Programme (January 2020 meeting) (*paragraph 17*).
39. Health Outcomes for Wiltshire children (*paragraphs 24 to 27*).
40. Performance monitoring reports (June 2020 and January 2021) (*paragraph 28*).

Further meetings for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Children's Select Committee

41. Housing for previously LAC (*paragraph 21*).
42. Area Board's Youth Grants (*paragraph 31*).

To discuss at the 2020 OS and Executive meeting

43. Scrutiny of the impact and effectiveness of FACT (*paragraph 9*).

Refer to another OS committee

44. Social Mobility - Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (*paragraph 10*).

Proposal

45. That the above topics proposed for further scrutiny be agreed and, where relevant, used to populate the forward work plan of the Children's Select Committee, which will be submitted to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chairman of the Children's Select Committee

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Background Papers

None

Appendices

None