

# Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

## Minutes - 13 April 2016

### Attendance

#### Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Peter O'Neill ( Chair)  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar  
Cllr Christopher Haynes  
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss  
Cyril Randles  
Cllr Daniel Warren  
Cllr Richard Whitehouse  
Rosalie Watkins  
Cyril Randles  
Kashmire Hawker  
Froger Cera  
Isobel Ricketts

#### In Attendance

Cllr Claire Darke – Cabinet Member for Education

#### Employees

Bill Hague	Service Manager – School Places and Transport
Alexandra Jones	Assistant Director - School Standards
Julien Kramer	Director of Education
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Trevor Pringle	Head of School Planning and Resources

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*     *Title*

### 1     **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following member(s) of the panel:

Councillor Michael Hardacre  
Councillor Paula Brookfield  
Councillor Arun Photay  
Councillor Welcome Koussoukama  
Councillor Martin Waite

### 2     **Declarations of interest**

The following members of the panel declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 Wolverhampton Secondary School Sufficiency Strategy

Cyril Randles  
Rosalie Watkins  
Councillor Jasbinder Dehar  
Councillor Daniel Warren

3 **Minutes of the previous meeting (20 January 2016)**

The panel agreed to amend the minutes to show Julien Kramer, Director of Education, as being in attendance at the meeting.

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2016, subject to the agreed changes, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

Minute 5 – Safeguarding Children’s Board Annual Report and Executive Summary 2014-15

Scrutiny Officer advised that further to the panel discussion about the equalities implications statement in the covering report it has been agreed with Gillian Ming that scrutiny will be involved much earlier in the drafting of the next annual safeguarding board report. A draft of the annual report will be shared with the panel when available.

5 **Brighter Futures: Improving Our Schools' Annual Report 2016**

Julien Kramer, Director of Education, introduced the report and highlighted the improvements in educational performance. The panel welcomed the positive messages about the progress made since the previous report was presented.

The panel queried the reason for not including a reference to the performance of local Pupil Referral Units (PRU). The Director of Education commented that the annual report provides a summary of overall educational performance. The performance of PRUs is monitored by the Council and Ofsted.

Alex Jones, Assistant Director – School Standards, agreed to present a report on the performance of the PRU element of this service to a future meeting of the panel. The report will be jointly prepared with the Head of Service Early Help.

The panel suggested that a future report showing the performance ranking in league tables should include a date of all Local Authority schools. The panel suggested that the annual report should also include a table to show trend in performance.

The Director of Education accepted the suggestion and agreed to include the change in the next annual report.

The panel welcomed the increase to 78 per cent of primary schools and 81 per cent of secondary schools in Wolverhampton rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding. The Assistant Director commented on planned changes in the assessment criteria and the need to continue efforts to build on achievements.

The Assistant Director noted that the Council monitors the performance of maintained schools and uses intelligence from different sources to decide the level of support needed. The Assistant Director explained that schools are allocated a local authority category which will determine the level of support provided.

The Director of Education commented on the improving picture detailed in the report and the work done with schools to strengthen partnership working arrangements.

The panel commented on the quality of the post 16 education offer in Wolverhampton. The Director of Education responded that the quality of the offer is improving. The panel discussed the importance of providing children with special educational needs a wider choice of educational options and providing information on options. The Director of Education explained that the Council has a statutory duty to support children with special needs. The Director of Education explained that a systematic audit of the post 16 service provision in Wolverhampton is being completed.

The Director of Education agreed to bring a report on post 16 support for children with special educational needs to a future meeting of the panel.

Cllr Claire Darke, Cabinet Member for Education, thanked the panel for the comments on the annual report and welcomed the progress made and work done to support the improvements.

#### Resolved

1. Assistant Director – School Standards and Head of Service Early Help to present report on the performance of pupil referral units in Wolverhampton to a future meeting.
2. Assistant Director – School Standards agreed to include suggested changes to the presentation of school league table performance in 2017 annual report.
3. Director of Education to present future report to panel on post 16 educational provision with a specific section on support offered to young people with special educational needs.

#### 6 **Secondary school Ofsted outcomes and current Local Authority categorisation**

Julien Kramer, Director of Education, introduced the report and commented on the work with different schools to improve educational outcomes for all children in Wolverhampton. Alex Jones, Assistant Director- School Standards commented on the improvement in GSCE results and the expectation that future Ofsted judgements will show and attainment against a baseline.

The Assistant Director – School Standards, commented that the local cohort are awaiting Ofsted judgements on local schools, which when inspected would show a better picture of the progress made.

The panel welcomed the increase in the number of Wolverhampton schools rated as either good or outstanding. The panel queried the support offered to those schools where there are concerns about their educational performance.

The Assistant Director – School Standards explained that extra resources are available to monitor schools and to intervene where necessary to help improve educational standards.

The panel commented on the implications of Governments plans for schools and the future role of the local authority to intervene where there are concerns about poor educational outcomes for children and arrangements for local accountability of the service. The Director of Education briefed the panel on key headlines in the Government proposals that all schools will become an academy and the possible impact on the future role of local authorities.

The Director of Education explained that we are still awaiting more details about the plans, but based on his experience local authorities will have a continuing responsibility for key aspects of the education of children.

The panel queried the planned changes to the grading of exam results and what work was being done to make employers aware of the new grading criteria. The Assistant Director – School Standards gave a brief overview of the new grade criteria but explained that the service will have a better understanding of the impact when more information is published.

Resolved

The Assistant Director – School Standards agreed to present a report to a meeting of panel in September 2016 about changes to educational attainment grades.

## 7 **Academy Partnership Protocol**

Julien Kramer, Director of Education, briefed the panel on the main headlines in the report and the reasons for developing the protocol. The Director of Education explained that the protocol was aimed at building and improving local relationship with schools. The Director of Education explained that the growth in the number of academy schools and the recent Government proposals led to discussion about the future relationship with the Council.

The Director of Education outlined the benefits of the protocol and confirmed that there had been discussions with local head teachers and academy trusts about the development of the protocol.

The panel welcomed the proposal to introduce a protocol as detailed in the report. The panel queried if the protocol would cover issues such as the adoption of national employment agreements, for example, the recognition of trade unions. Trevor Pringle, Head of School Planning and Resources, explained that based on past experience the majority of schools have adopted policies and procedures developed by the Council and also national conditions of employment.

The panel queried how the protocol would deal with the issue of academies willingness to share market sensitive or information that could damage its reputation. Bill Hague, Service Manager School Places and Transport, explained that the local authority has a statutory duty for school admissions and has built up a good working relationships with schools, which did not breach issues of commercial confidentiality.

The panel queried the action being taken to inform young people about the proposals and how it might impact on their future education. The Director of Education welcomed the involvement of the pupil council and commented that they have a role in helping to raise awareness.

The Director of Education commented that the Council wants to improve the breadth of the post 16 education offer, but accepted that schools are struggling with class numbers. However, there is evidence that more young people are choosing to stay on at school rather than leave to take up other learning opportunities.

The Director of Education commented on plans for consulting more widely with school representatives and build on preliminary talks about the protocol.

Resolved

The panel welcomed the report.

## 8 **Wolverhampton Secondary School Sufficiency Strategy**

Julien Kramer, Director of Education, outlined the background to the report. The Director of Education explained that the Council has a duty to plan the development of secondary school provision.

The Director of Education explained that there was a projected increase of 20 per cent growth in Year 7 cohorts between 2015/16 and 2021/22.

Trevor Pringle, Head of School Resources and Planning, outlined the principles of the strategy and highlighted the need to consider if current provision was being used to maximum effect before considering options such as increasing capacity. The Head of School Resources and Planning commented on the link between the strategy and post 16 provision and how to improve the offer.

The panel queried if the Council would be expected to meet the cost for providing extra places to deal with the expected 'bulge' in school numbers. The Head of School Resources and Planning commented on the challenge facing the Council as the majority of secondary school provision is delivered by academies. The Head of School Resources and Planning commented on the previous investment to expand primary school provision. The Head of School Resources and Planning explained that the Council needs to find out details about current capacity across all secondary schools and identify areas of high demand for places.

The panel queried if the policy towards maintaining a number of surplus places to respond to changes in demand.

The panel commented on the cyclical nature of school planning. In response to a previous fall in the demand for secondary school places a number were closed and it was queried if these buildings could be re-used to meet the projected increase. The panel discussed changes in the use of previous school buildings which limits this is a possible solution. The Head of School Resources and Planning commented on challenge to planning and the range of factors that might impact on demand for school places.

The panel queried the process for predicting the growth in demand for post 16 provision given the different options available to young people. The Head of School Resources and Planning explained the methodology used to predict changes in future demand had been rated as following best practice.

The panel queried the impact of increasing number of schools appeals and the resources available to meet demand. Bill Hague, Service Manager School Places and Transport, detailed a number of changes made to respond to the increase in the number of appeals, for example, the introduction of an online appeal application form.

Resolved

The panel comments of the draft strategy to be considered.

The meeting closed at 19:38