

# Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

## Minutes - 20 June 2018

### Attendance

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

Cllr Peter O'Neill (Chair)  
Cllr Udey Singh (Vice-Chair)  
Cyril Randles  
Cllr Obaida Ahmed  
Cllr Simon Bennett  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar  
Cllr Celia Hibbert  
Cllr Asha Mattu  
Cllr Rita Potter  
Cllr Clare Simm

#### Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith  
Emma Bennett,  
Bill Hague  
Stephanie Knight

Scrutiny Officer  
Director for Children's Service  
Head of School Organisation  
School Organisation Officer

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

*Item No.*      *Title*

- 1      **Apologies**  
Apologies were received from the following members of the panel:  
  
John Dovey  
Cllr Beverley Momenabadi
- 2      **Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest recorded.
- 3      **Minutes of the previous meeting (11 April 2018)**  
That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 4      **Matters arising**  
Minute 5 – Head Start Phase 3 – Progress and Impact Update  
  
Scrutiny Officer advised that further to the panel discussion details of the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Children's Trust Board were sent to panel members.

Scrutiny Officer advised the panel that Emma Cleary, Headstart Programme Manager, would present an update on the findings of the sustainability plan to the panel in April 2019. The panel work programme would be updated.

**5 Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel - draft work programme**

Scrutiny Officer presented the draft panel work programme and invited members to comment. The panel discussed items on Forward Plan – July 2018 and it was agreed that the following items would be added to the panel work programme

- Youth Justice Plan 2018-2019 - action plan
- Care Leavers Local Offer – suggestion that this could be a joint meeting

The Director of Children's Services advised the panel that the report on Family Drug and Alcohol Court will not be progressed at this time.

Bill Hague, suggested that progress report on plans for school expansion could be presented to the panel for scrutiny.

The panel discussed concerns about young people not meeting the apprenticeship educational requirements for english and mathematics. Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation, agreed to discuss the matter further with Meredith Teasdale, Director of Education. The Director of Education leads on apprenticeships and will be asked to report back to a future meeting.

The panel queried the use of pupil premium. The Head of School Organisation, commented that the subject had been scrutinised previously and that use of the fund varies between schools. It was agreed that the previous paper be shared with Councillor Potter.

The panel discussed the issue of help available for students with special educational needs. The Director for Children's Services agreed that this would benefit from scrutiny. The Director advised the panel that the SEN service is due to externally inspected and the council will receive a self-assessment report which will inform future work in this area.

Resolved:

The panel suggested the following topics be added to the panel work programme:

- The provision of SEN at post 16 and presentation self-assessment report on current provision
- Youth Justice Plan 2018-2019 – action plan
- Care Leavers Local Offer
- Apprenticeship educational requirements
- Progress report on school's expansion

**6 Children and Young People's Improvement Plan: 2017-2018**

Emma Bennett, Director for Children's Service, introduced the report and outlined progress on the delivery of the Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan 2017-2018.

The Director advised the panel that the plan incorporates the recommendations detailed in the Ofsted action plan. The implementation of the plan is monitored monthly. The Director for Children's Service advised the panel of the aim to create a more strategic plan to show the impact and performance of the work being done to improve outcomes for children.

The panel queried issues about the retention and recruitment of social workers and current turnover. The Director for Children's Service commented on the ripple effect of impact of changes in the senior management and the planned service restructuring to address the recruitment and retention of experienced social work staff. The Director for Children's Service added that meetings have been held with staff and issues about management support and casework load has been highlighted as concern. The issue of the lack of career progression pathways and confusion about management roles and responsibilities was also highlighted. These issues are being considered as part for the proposed restructure of the service – consultation with staff starts in July 2018.

The Director for Children's Service advised the panel Wolverhampton was in the top quartile nationally and is working to improve the offer of education, training and employment to care leavers. The Director for Children's Service advised the panel about the range of work undertaken to support looked after children and gave examples of job placement opportunities being created in waste services – four care leavers are working in the service and two carer leavers have work placements elsewhere with an insurance company.

The panel queried the outstanding actions in the Ofsted Action Plan which had been not been completed. The Director for Children's Service commented on the challenge to embed practice in the areas and the Ofsted judgement that work was not judged as being done consistently. The issue is being discussed with the regional link Ofsted Inspector for social care. The Council must submit an annual self-assessment to evidence that progress is being made to deliver the required service improvements.

The panel discussed the issue of the recruitment and retention of social work staff and its impact on service users. The Director for Children's Services commented that retaining experienced social workers is one of the biggest challenges facing the Council. The Council has a rolling recruitment process and recently recruited 16 newly qualified social workers who have protected caseloads to help manage the demands on them and support their development.

The Director for Children's Services commented on the challenge in responding to the better levels of pay offered by agencies across the region. The local authorities in the region has signed a memorandum of understanding to cap the level of pay for agency staff to help efforts to maintain workforce levels.

The panel queried the idea of using contact centres to generate income for the Council. The Director for Children's Services explained that some local authorities do not have supervised contact centre services and the idea being considered is that facilities in Wolverhampton could be offered to other Local Authorities.

The panel thanked the Director for Children's Services for the presentation.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the 2018-19 Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan to be considered.
2. The panel support the progress made to implement Ofsted recommendations.
3. The panel agreed to receive a further progress report on the implementation of the 2018-19 Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan on 16 January 2019.

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### **The Vision for School Organisation in Wolverhampton 2018-2020**

Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation, presented a report on the vision and plans for school organisation for pre-decision scrutiny. The Head of School Organisation gave an overview of the results of the public consultation and the work done to respond to demographic changes in schools and the demand for places at secondary schools in Wolverhampton. The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that most of secondary schools are academies and therefore outside of local authority control. The Council will however continue working with academies and the Regional Schools Commissioner. The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that previously that there would be separate plans for primary and secondary schools place planning, but a decision was taken to combine the plans into a single document.

The Head of School Organisation explained the impact of changes in secondary school surplus provision from 6% to 5%, school reorganisation and the need to increase the number of places. The Head of School Organisation advised the panel of the need for sustained investment to create sufficient number of school places in the future and the work being done to get a more accurate assessment of pupil numbers. The Head of School Organisation commented on the challenges in predicting numbers following the increase in the number of new free schools which are not opening in areas where demand is considered to be greatest which is adding to the problem of parents finding sufficient secondary school places in the areas needed.

The Head of School Organisation commented on the work being done to support post 16 agenda and encouraging schools to work together to combine class sizes where numbers are low so that they can offer efficient A Level courses - the Council is concerned with improving the teaching environment for this age group.

The panel queried the issue of increase in the number of school appeals work done to increase capacity in the more popular schools. The Head of School Organisation acknowledged the issue of demand for places for popular schools and the work being done to raise standards at other schools to offer parents alternatives. The Head of School Organisation commented on work done to help underperforming schools to improve and discussions with the Regional Schools Commissioner who is aware of the work being done and improvements in the performance among Wolverhampton schools.

The panel queried if funding went with the child that moves schools or is expelled. The Head of School Planning confirmed that the funds will follow the child but may take time depending on when they move between schools.

The panel queried the reasons for the low public response from schools and the public to the consultation document and expressed concern that this does not give a

reliable picture of the situation. The panel queried options for increasing the numbers of responses. The Head of School Organisation commented on the work done since 2012 to increase the number of responses, but with limited success. The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that Stephanie Knight, School Organisation Officer, would be looking at ideas for improving responses to future consultations.

The panel discussed the provision available to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN. The Head of School Organisation advised the panel how medical evidence submitted by parents or carers in support of school application is considered when deciding levels of priority. The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that highest priority in the allocation of places is given to looked after children or previously looked after children.

The panel discussed the funding of school expansion. The Head of School Organisation advised that panel that an annual capital settlement is received from the Dept of Education for the purposes of meeting the Council's basic need duties, but the grant received does not cover the full cost of school expansions as the funding model only provides increase in school places to be done in a piecemeal approach. The Council wants to avoid unnecessary disruption to the education of children caused by a rolling programme of building work and want instead for the work to be done in a more strategic and less disruptive way.

The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that a report on funding for school's capital programme will be presented to Cabinet in September 2018 which will detail plans for financing the increase in school places. The panel agreed to receive a report about the outcome of this discussion at the meeting on 14 November 2018.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the vision for school's organisations 2018-20 to be included in the report to Cabinet.
2. The Head of School Organisation to report about the outcome of discussion about future school expansions at the panel meeting on 14 November 2018.

The meeting ended 7.05 pm