

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Tuesday, 18th July, 2017.

Present:- Councillors Anderson, Brooker, Carter, Chahal, Chohan, N Holledge, Kelly and Pantelic

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor R Sandhu

Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members

Jo Rockall – Secondary School Teacher Representative

Non-Voting Co-opted Members

Hamzah Ahmed – Slough Youth Parliament

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Brooker declared his positions as Governor at Churchmead and Ryvers Schools. He also declared his membership of Slough Borough Council's (SBC) Foster Panel.

Hamzah Ahmed declared his membership of the Local Safeguarding Panel and his position as Governor at Cippenham Primary School.

2. Election of Chair for 2017-18

Cllr Pantelic nominated Cllr Brooker as Chair for the Panel. This was seconded by Cllr N Holledge.

Resolved: that Cllr Brooker be elected to the position of Chair of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel unanimously for the Municipal Year 2017 – 18.

(At this point, Cllr Brooker took the Chair).

3. Election of Vice-Chair for 2017-18

Resolved: that Cllr Kelly be elected to the position of Vice-Chair of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel unanimously for the Municipal Year 2017 – 18.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th April 2017

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th April 2017 be approved as a correct record.

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5. Action Progress Report

The Children's Early Help Commissioning Board would be in place for the new academic year. Meanwhile, the matter of online training on safeguarding children would be pursued.

Resolved: That the Action Progress Report be noted.

(Cllr Chahal joined the meeting).

6. Member Questions

The responses to the members' questions were circulated to the Panel.

Resolved: That the responses be noted.

(Cllr Chohan joined the meeting).

7. Five Year Plan - Outcome 1 Group Progress Report

The Director of Children's Services had been put in charge of the delivery of the outcome. The outcome was one of five, and (as with the others) a group had been established to oversee progress. The outcome also reported to Cabinet and featured in individual staff appraisals, and therefore featured at all levels of strategic planning.

However, some elements of the outcome did not fit within the Children's Services directorate (e.g. childhood obesity); outcome one had significantly more cross-cutting themes than the other four outcomes. As a result, the outcome delivery group reflected this in its diverse membership. The group was also establishing baselines for performance, although in some areas (e.g. proportion of local children subject to child protection plans) this was inappropriate and in other areas it would take a significant length of time before the suitable baseline was apparent.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would discuss the matter of childhood obesity on 14th September 2017, with a view to commissioning a Task & Finish Group.
- Regarding the proportion of local children subject to child protection plans, the numbers involved were not indications of 'success' or otherwise in isolation. However, figures which were at significant variance from previous levels would generate discussion.
- Several initiatives were underway on childhood obesity. Some were targeted at children who were already deemed to be overweight (e.g. 'Let's Get Going'), whilst others were preventative (e.g. 'Daily Mile', efforts to make the school day less sedentary). In addition to these programmes, SBC was working across departments and also

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considering how SBC could be role models and leaders in the area. The wider context (e.g. housing, leisure strategy, parenting) were also part of discussions and would feature in any future Task & Finish Group.

- The leisure strategy had seen significant expenditure; however, members stated that involvement of the public and connection with public health and schools would improve outcomes.
- As well as the major policy areas, SBC should consider the messages sent out by all of its actions. As an example, the vending machine in St Martin's Place reception currently sold carbonated drinks, sweets and crisps. A more healthy set of options may support efforts to boost outcomes for local children.
- The current wording of the target was 'reduce the rise in prevalence of childhood obesity'. The level of ambition in this was questioned; in addition, how would SBC ensure that responsibility for this was not so diffuse that no-one was ultimately held to account for its progress?
- Some members argued that the recent rise in type 2 diabetes may necessitate a more radical approach (comparable with the public smoking ban introduced in 2007). In addition, it may be necessary to identify specific schools or geographical areas of Slough where obesity was significantly higher than elsewhere in the borough.
- Whilst SBC was confident of the approaches taken by schools on healthy eating, it was recognised that further investigation into the causes of obesity was required. A radical collective partnership response would be needed to resolve the matter effectively.
- A meeting of the leaders of the strategic solutions to obesity would be held in the summer of 2017. This would identify the barriers to progress and the issues involved.

Resolved:

1. That an item on 'Stay Safe' be added to the agenda for 25th October 2017.
2. That an item on 'Achieve Economic Wellbeing' be added to the agenda for 8th February 2018.
3. That an item on 'Enjoy and Achieve' be added to the agenda for 14th March 2018.
4. That an update on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work on childhood obesity be added to the agenda on 25th October 2017.

8. School Improvement Partnership

The report was based on previous discussions the Panel had held regarding underachievement amongst white British children. The paper outlined the relationship SBC had with local schools; rather than being able to dictate to schools what their policies would be, SBC worked in partnership with them on strategic planning.

SBC had set aside £150,000 to spend on the Slough Teaching School Alliance (STSA). In addition to this, a Liaison Officer had been appointed to operate as a bridge between SBC and schools. This individual worked for 2

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days a week on their responsibilities, and also had an established reputation in Slough as an experienced head teacher. Schools were asked to submit bids for a part of the £150,000, with each of the institutions being aware that they were likely to receive around £3,000; as a result, joint bids were being welcomed to increase that figure. Some proposals (e.g. bids for supporting English teaching) had already received funding.

Schools were also being encouraged to offer each other support as appropriate; for example, Upton Court Grammar School was giving help to Ditton Park School on teaching students with higher ability. In general, SBC was moving away from a traditional 'tick list' approach of school inspections towards an ongoing, collaborative partnership style of working.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The new approach was also a result of the money being used coming from the Designated Schools Grant (DSG). Given the role of the Schools Forum in deciding this allocation of money, partnership working was a desirable outcome.
- SBC was also able to use its position to inform schools on the overall strategic situation across Slough. This helped with initiatives such as the English Hub, which helped with English teaching across the area.
- The measurement of the benefits accrued by these initiatives was agreed with the participant schools on the basis on the project's remit. For example, the English Network was clearly targeted on the new specifications for A Level and GCSE English, and was aimed at consistency of appraisal so that students entered examinations with a clearer idea of expectations. This would therefore help with student attainment.
- South Buckinghamshire District Council also had a similar arrangement, with some of its ideas (e.g. joint inset days) possibly applicable in Slough.
- SBC now had consultants for primary and secondary schools; these individuals could advise and encourage schools but were unable to enforce policies.
- STSA was one element of schools improvement. SBC was also committed to gathering strategic intelligence, holding challenging conversations with schools as appropriate. However, regarding the Panel's interest in white British underachievement, this had not been the subject of any school's proposal and SBC had not compiled a complete analysis of the situation yet.
- Overall, SBC was satisfied that it had recruited to key posts in the education team. Whilst much work remained to be done, the overall direction of travel was welcomed.
- The Schools Forum would discuss matters such as the future of the Senior Education Liaison Officer and other issues relating to funding. However, it was a desire of the Forum that initiatives would not be halted during an academic year.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

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9. Soulsbury Pay Scale - Verbal Update

The matter remained with Human Resources; management had recently held a discussion on the issue, and had requested more information. The question had been raised by SBC's problems with recruiting for 3 Educational Psychologists, despite advertising for these positions on a number of occasions. SBC's salaries had been identified as a potential factor in this.

The request for information focused on 2 questions; proof that other authorities paid the Soulsbury Pay Scale and evidence that any decision to pay it in this case would not have further implications for SBC. On the second question, officers were confident that Soulsbury's applicability solely for Education Psychologists and School Improvement staff would contain any increase in pay.

Members reflected their previously stated wish to have information from Human Resources on the history of the decision.

Resolved: That the Panel receive information regarding the questions raised at the meeting on 19th April 2017.

10. Forward Work Programme

Resolved:

1. That an item on 14 – 19 provision and links to economic strategy be added to the agenda for 8th February 2018.
2. That an item on school standards in Slough be added to the agenda for 14th March 2018.
3. That an item on the role of school to school support in Slough be added to the agenda for 18th April 2018.

11. Date of Next Meeting - 25th October 2017

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.32 pm and closed at 8.04 pm)