

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Tuesday, 19th July, 2016.

Present:- Councillors Anderson, Brooker, Chahal, Qaseem and Sadiq

Education Voting Co-opted Members

James Welsh – Catholic Diocese of Northampton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Mann, Morris and Pantelic
Jo Rockall and Maggie Stacey

PART 1

1. Declaration of Interest

Cllr Sadiq declared her employment at Eden Girls' School. Cllr Chahal declared his position as the Chair of Governors at a local school. Cllr Brooker declared his daughter's attendance at Burnham Park Academy and his position as Governor at Churchmead School.

2. Election of Chair for 2016 - 17

Cllr Anderson nominated Cllr Brooker as Chair for the Panel. This was seconded by Cllr Sadiq.

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 2016 – 17.

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

3. Election of Vice-Chair for 2016 - 17

Cllr Anderson nominated Cllr Chahal as Vice-Chair for the Panel. This was seconded by Cllr Sadiq.

Resolved: that Cllr Chahal be elected to the position of Vice-Chair of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel unanimously for the Municipal Year 2016 – 17.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st April 2016

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2016 were approved as a correct record.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 19.07.16

5. Member Questions

A member's question regarding Langley Hall Primary Academy's Ofsted inspection, and the response from Cambridge Education, was circulated. The following points arose from discussion of the matter:

- Members of the Panel should still take an interest in academy schools, despite their independence from local authority control. The Director of Children's Services (DCS) was currently seeking assurances from the Regional Schools Commissioner on Langley Hall Primary in light of Ofsted's findings.
- The Slough Children's Services Trust (SCST) had offered training and audit to Langley Hall Primary, but was unsure if the institution had taken this up. In the written response, Cambridge Education clarified that the school had not accepted the offer of an autumn term visit to prepare for an Ofsted inspection.

6. School Places

Slough Borough Council (SBC) used birth data to estimate the number of reception places required at primary schools in the future; this was the best indicator as to trends. Given this information, it was anticipated that demand would decline in the years 2017 – 2020, with Foxborough Primary School already planning to reduce provision in 2017. SBC worked on the basis that 2 contingency classes would always be required; on this basis, there would be no surplus classes in 2016 – 17, but this would increase over time, leaving 6 in 2019 – 2020.

However, Slough tended to be subject to inward migration. This could put pressure on school places for years beyond reception, and in 2019 – 2020 there would be 17 extra classes for year 6 above current levels. As a result, several measures were being explored, including bulge classes, a temporary increase in class sizes from 30 to 32, the use of empty classes in new free schools and the use of freed up space in schools that reduce their admission numbers.

The expansion in classes for secondary schools had the establishment of a SASH2 school as a central aspect; sites for this institution were being sought. In addition, the 4.5 classes categorised as 'expansion of Slough schools' could arise from either existing schools or the creation of a new free school. The increase in places for special educational needs and pupil referral units required forecasting, for which data was being sought.

School places would be managed to maximise the benefit to Slough residents, and would also allow for adequate playing with easy access for schools. SBC would maximise the available sources of funding for programme delivery and would only support expansion of selective schools in cases where the expansion will not add to the imbalance between selective and non-selective places. Schools would be part of a holistic plan for future

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 19.07.16

developments in the borough, and SBC recognised that land use pressures must result in provision being made outside the borough.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- Class sizes could exceed 30 in Key Stage 2 classes; this was not a recent change to the law, with 'basic needs' having always allowed for this in the legislation.
- Whilst the placement of students at Langley Grammar School was reliant on test results, it was anticipated that the number of Slough children entering the institution would rise from 30 to approximately 50. It was very much recognised that expansion in grammar provision should not solely be for the benefit of children outside the SBC area.
- The expansion of Arbour Vale offered the best, most instant solution to local needs. However, the school playing fields should not be put at risk by this as they had a separate footprint to the school buildings.
- Early Years was also an issue; some schools were considering decreasing their provision, but the Government's '30 hours a week of care' programme was also a matter requiring a response. At present, whenever a school was expanding its Early Years provision was also increasing. The Early Years team was working on this, and could keep the Panel informed as appropriate.
- Information on school spaces, as maintained by SBC on the website, required much work by users to make it useful for their purposes. The Admissions team were working on the system, and had reduced the delay times for information reaching parents.
- SBC had identified the upper year groups in primary schools as the greatest pressure point in future provision.
- The impact of the recent decision to leave the European Union was, at present, hard to deduce. SBC had the option of expanding existing schools, arranging bulge classes and using new schools opening in the area to meet any increased demand.
- Langley Hall Primary School was planning to open a secondary school in 2018. Despite the recent Ofsted inspection, SBC recognised the assistance that the school had offered by opening, and SBC was in discussions with the institution to co-ordinate provision and resolve funding issues.
- SEN was an area under review. Some local schools had been challenged by the level of need of some children, and therefore SBC recognised that a mixture of mainstream and specialist provision was required.
- The transfer of services to SCST could also see more children referred to SEN as thresholds changed.

Resolved:

1. That the Panel receive an updated version of the table outlining school places in secondary schools.
2. That the Panel receive information on the forms of entry, as outlined in the 'Gold Project' updates for Cabinet.

7. Slough Ofsted Delivery Plan

SCST and SBC had formed a joint Delivery Plan, relating to the improvements required following Ofsted's 2015 inspection. It had been submitted to Ofsted, and refined in light of their comments.

The Plan included a section on governance arrangements to oversee progress. SCST had its own board, with their Commissioner still working with SBC on reviewing arrangements. The Slough Local Safeguarding Children's Board (SLSCB) also had input; meeting between SCST and SBC were monthly, and those between SLSCB less frequent (around once every two months). The SCST Commissioner then reported on progress to the Government. Considering that Ofsted were also monitoring matters, this meant that arrangements were placed under rigorous scrutiny. SCST was also realistic as to the scale of the work that was required.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- SCST saw the level of expectations as a major challenge; to get Children's Services in Slough to the required standard would require significant training and a culture change. The level of agency staff also needed to be reduced to embed these alterations.
- Permanent staff would be attracted to Slough through investment and training, rather than wage inflation. It had become clear that those staff who committed to the area did so through the desire to create a good organisation and the capacity to undertake their work to a high standard. SCST's academy was also offering newly qualified social workers a chance to work at all local hubs, which should assist with future staff retention rates. A retention package was being offered to ensure that Slough did not just become a place to train in preparation for careers elsewhere.
- Whilst the contract between SBC and SCST set out the key performance indicators, it did not set out the targets related to these. At the present time, the majority now had targets although some remained unset. These would be shared with the Panel.
- A permanent DCS would be appointed in the near future. Headhunters had been approached to find suitable candidates, and some of these had held informal discussions with SBC's Chief Executive.
- The budget for the first 18 months of SCST's work had been established. Negotiations on future arrangements would commence in the near future, ensuring the right balance between necessary costs and efficiencies. However, the fact that SCST had discovered major issues in need of resolution since assuming responsibilities did mean that some decisions were required on necessary expenditure.
- One crucial aspect of future work was the need to establish consistent thresholds, which would be applied by all staff. It was imperative that good practice and the adherence to legal guidelines should become

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 19.07.16

embedded in staff, with training and supervision to be central to this. SCST had strengthened enforcement regimes amongst staff to ensure they were prepared to undertake this.

- SBC would oversee the contract with SCST through monthly board meetings. However, it was acknowledged that the service needed fundamental reform; SCST's work on this should see an improvement on the depth and quality of information available to make analytical comments.
- SCST would undertake regular programmes aimed at auditing cases and highlighting issues regarding practice. Recent Ofsted inspections of Children's Services in other local authorities were used to design the most relevant criteria for these. As part of this, an Ofsted Readiness Group had been established to prepare for such an inspection. Given Slough's status as 'inadequate', it also received Ofsted monitoring visits.
- A Quality and Innovations Group had also been established to discuss these matters. It meets roughly once every two months.
- SCST would assume responsibility for children's centres from October 1st 2016 onwards; this decision had been part of the Secretary of State's direction. The risk that this could distract from attention being paid to children's services was acknowledged and being managed. As well as these risks, it offered opportunities for improvements (e.g. closer working between departments, offering social worker surgeries in the community) and also children's centres were in a better position than children's services had been when taken over by SCST. Members did wish to note their reservations on the potential for this to impact on children's services, and wanted it included in any update given to the Panel.

Resolved:

1. That the targets for key performance indicators relating to SCST would be shared with the Panel.
2. That children's centres would be included in any future report to the Panel regarding SCST's work.

8. Slough Borough Council's Section 11 Audit

Section 11 audits were undertaken to ensure that all services across a local authority were aware of their role in child protection and had suitable policies in place. However, as the 2015 Ofsted inspection had noted, these had not been conducted at SBC recently.

One frequent issue with these audits was where services did not see the direct link between their quotidian work and child protection. To counter this, SBC had established templates for completing forms and offered support to Heads of Service. Whilst this still required reinforcement, measures were being put in place to ensure that this would be embedded as a constant theme across SBC services. It was acknowledged that this was still a work in progress, but it did now have ownership from SBC's Senior Leadership Team.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 19.07.16

The Panel made the following points in discussion:

- SBC intended to make sure that future audits were not just about compliance. Rather, SBC intended to ensure that it would be at the centre of planning for services.
- The action plan required populating with information; the Corporate Management Team had reviewed the template and developed action plans to be revisited every 6 months.
- SLSCB would have a new Chair by the autumn of 2016. Any changes to this body would be undertaken in light of the Wood Review into Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (published in May 2016). Work was also being conducted with the Department for Education to scope the requirements for the new Chair, as well as key partners. The job description was now available, with interviews to be conducted in the summer of 2016.
- It was recognised that the alteration in service provision had created a complex series of arrangements and reporting mechanisms. Councillors would be prioritised, but the system required simplification to ensure that both duplication and omission of reporting issues was avoided.

Resolved: that the Panel receive an update on progress made regarding Section 11 audits in six month's time.

9. Forward Work Programme

Resolved:

1. That the work programme be updated to include the following items:
 - **26th October 2016:** single agenda item on SCST. This will be an update on SCST after one year of improvement work, and will also include their assumption of responsibility for Children's Centres. It will also be a joint meeting with Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 - **8th December 2016:** Exam results, Youth Offender Team, Delivery Plan update, Ofsted inspections of schools.
 - **9th February 2017:** Corporate Parenting Panel progress, Section 11 update (following on from last night's item), Fostering and Adoption.
 - **15th March 2017:** Slough Youth Parliament, Cambridge Education after the 1st October alteration of responsibilities, Slough Local Safeguarding Children's Board, school admissions (for information).
 - **19th April 2017:** Ofsted inspections of schools (termly update).
2. That SATs results be circulated to members of the Panel.

10. Date of Next Meeting - 26th October 2016

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.46 pm)