

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 14th March, 2018.

Present:- Councillors Brooker (Chair), Kelly (Vice-Chair), Chahal (from 7.16pm), Chohan, Matloob, Qaseem (from 6.52pm) and Sharif (from 6.52pm)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Arvind Dhaliwal and N Holledge

PART 1

42. Declarations of Interest

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

Councillor Chahal is a current member of the Joint Parenting Panel.

43. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th February 2018

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th February 2018 be approved as a correct record.

44. Action Progress Report

Resolved: That the Action Progress Report be noted.

45. Member Questions

The response to the written questions was circulated.

Resolved: That the response be noted.

46. 5 Year Plan - "Achieve Economic Wellbeing" - Supporting Young People Into Education, Employment and Training

The report focused on SBC's work to support young people in ensuring that they received opportunities to pursue education, employment or training until their 18th birthday. Those who were not in such positions were categorised as NEETs; SBC had made avoiding this a vital part of its agenda for young people. As well as supporting its residents in securing such chances, it made sure that such placements were accredited and thus led to recognised qualifications and improved life chances. To support this, SBC was working closely with partners (especially schools).

There were 3 key elements to this; prevention, tracking and engagement. Prevention involved working with secondary schools to identify those at risk of becoming NEETs (referred to as RONIs). These were then assigned 1 of 4 levels depending on the level of risk involved. This policy had helped SBC ensure that the local number of NEETs was exceptionally low, with the

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authority in the top quintile nationally. The tracking procedure allowed SBC to know the status of all young people in years 12 and 13 and involved 2 dedicated full-time staff members. These staff used a variety of methods (e.g. schools liaison, engagement with projects, personal visits) so that all NEETs were supported. This was in contrast to several other local authorities, who had abandoned such policies; this had caused them to have difficulty in understanding the extent of the issue in their area. The team involved in this work also had a specialist in the area of Children Looked After (CLAs) and care leavers. Engagement with young people encountering life issues was the most sensitive area of SBC's work. The range of difficulties involved was very large and complex, and could include attitudes, situations or other matters. SBC was persistent in these cases whilst remaining mindful of the needs of those involved.

The end result of SBC's work was a very low level of NEETs in Slough; however, it was not purely about statistics and SBC was committed to ensuring that this work fitted with its skills agenda. As part of this, a multi agency Strategic Skills and Employment Group had been established which was ensuring that there is a correlation between the EET Agenda and Skills Gaps.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- SBC was working with the travelling community through two work streams; one dedicated to those settling in urban dwellings, and those who continued to travel across the region. Intensive work was being undertaken with the Roma community, finding suitable work opportunities and adopting the 'One Slough' approach to the matter. Community development workers were also being recruited; SBC was fortunate that it has internal expertise regarding the travelling community and therefore understood the related issues.
- Those schools outside Slough who received local students had good links with the service (especially Burnham Park Academy and Churchmead) although were not involved with identifying RONIs. However, SBC was quick to identify such young people.
- The strategy for CLAs and those leaving care had been approved by the Joint Parenting Panel and launched; SBC also now offered support for CLAs who had moved out of the Borough.
- The quality of SBC's work was recognised by the Department for Education (especially through the regional group for NEETs). SBC also received request from other authorities for officer-to-officer level co-operation given its reputation.
- At present, SBC was developing the 14 – 19 skills agenda. The current situation saw good outcomes for level 2 apprenticeships but fewer for level 3 and 4 schemes. Apprenticeships would be a major element of the new skills agenda, ensuring that such schemes were suitable and were the right ones for those involved; SBC's support of its own apprenticeship scheme (as well as the Arvato equivalent) would be used in the construction of this. Slough was fortunate that its local economy was strong, which would further assist with this effort.

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- Careers advice was the responsibility of schools. However, through taster sessions and role modelling (e.g. senior managers who had been apprentices mentoring the new intake) SBC could help with the system.

(At this point, Cllrs Qaseem and Sharif joined the meeting)

- In cases where parents proved to be an obstacle to young people joining apprenticeship schemes, SBC worked to communicate the benefits of these opportunities. SBC was committed to the message that the academic route was not the only one open to those reaching the end of compulsory education.
- Any possible skills gaps resulting from the UK's departure from the European Union would be covered in the 14 – 19 skills agenda and work of the Skills & Employment Group.
- Where SBC encountered young people with behavioural issues, it worked with the individual to establish the root causes and help inform future life choices. If necessary, SBC would also support young people in influencing them to make choices that support them in ending influences which may negatively impact on their options.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

47. 14 - 19 Provision - Verbal Update

SBC was undertaking significant work on formulating the strategy at present. This would analyse local needs, map existing services and decide which needed to be commissioned or removed from provision, consult with partners and ensure that any gaps were eliminated. After this, recommendations would be made to the 14 – 19 Task & Finish Group. The matter would then return to the Panel.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The level of reading and writing amongst local young people would form part of the analysis. Conversations were also being held with schools to identify key themes.
- Standards at local schools were above national averages. Those who reached 16 without the attaining the necessary levels would continue with English and mathematics as part of functional skills provision.

Resolved: That 14 – 19 provision be added to the agenda for 13th March 2019.

48. Ofsted Inspection Adult Education - January 2018

SBC ran a joint service with Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM); this had been inspected in January 2018. At the previous inspection, all areas had been rated as 'requires improvement'. In 2018, Ofsted's overall rating remained at that level but some areas (e.g. personal

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development, apprenticeships) had risen to 'good'; in addition, safeguarding was now deemed to be effective.

However, concerns remained over the quality of teaching. Teacher recruitment processes were being altered to rectify this, and would improve the pace of change. In addition, governance and leadership had been enhanced. With development of entrepreneurship and analyses of local skills gaps and customer need, SBC was confident the means of improvement were in place. Combined with other innovations, this meant that the service was prepared to pledge that the next inspection would achieve a 'good' rating.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- It was acknowledged that some of the current roster of teachers struggled with motivating students in English and mathematics. Contracts were due to be reviewed soon, and those not at the requisite level would not be renewed. In addition, new tutors would face a higher bar; SBC would support these improvement efforts with more robust self-inspection to track improvement. It was also recognised that the diverse abilities of students had led to materials being pitched at inappropriate levels. SBC was confident that its teachers would be better suited to the requirements of the role by September 2018.
- In addition, initial testing of teaching and probation policies would be more thorough to support efforts to raise levels. The recruitment campaign for new tutors had been designed with the express aim of attracting teachers already rated as 'good' or 'outstanding'.
- SBC had always held information on the level of learners but this had not been used as effectively as possible. SBC was emphasising the vital nature of this information to teachers in preparing courses and ensuring they were sufficiently personalised. Tutors would also be trained on tracking students' progress; in addition, a Continuing Professional Development programme called 'Journey To Outstanding' had been designed.

(At this point, Cllr Chahal joined the meeting)

- SBC was reviewing its policies to allow greater creativity in recruiting teachers (e.g. retired tutors, members of under-represented communities) and would also ensure students had a well-publicised selection of day time, evening and weekend courses from which to choose. External agencies would also support these efforts.
- With the exception of the basic course (induction levels), all options offered by SBC led to accredited qualifications. However, progression needed to be tracked more effectively and standardisation of this was required.
- A robust and thorough analysis of local needs would shape the new offer (at present, SBC was following structures based on previous years' offers). The service also needed to be mindful of the differences between the communities served by SBC and RBWM.

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Resolved: That an item on adult education be added to the agenda for 13th March 2019.

49. School Standards and Effectiveness

SBC served an area with a very high proportion of academies and free schools (75% of all primary, secondary, special schools and PRUs). It had a good relationship with these bodies, and 87% of local schools were rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' (2% below the national average). This left SBC confident that local provision was in a good position, with particularly good progress made on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This area had seen a 13.2% rise in pupils attaining a Good Level of Development (GLD) since 2014 and had risen from below the national average to above it.

At Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving expected standards in Reading, Writing and Mathematics in Slough are above the national average for 2017. Key Stage 4 had introduced the 'Progress 8' and 'Attainment 8' measures; however, these had yet to become fully embedded and also tended to emphasise extreme results at either end of the achievement spectrum at present. However, Slough was presently above both national and local averages (although there was a recognised split between selective and non-selective schools). On Progress 8 scores (which essentially measured 'value added' by schools), both selective and non-selective schools were above national and local averages. At Key Stage 5, average A Level Point Score outcomes in Slough have progressed from just below the national average in 2016 to just above the national average in 2017. Meanwhile, scores for Applied General qualifications have progressed but remain just below the national average.

EYFS had a gender gap, with girls achieving better than boys on average. However, in 2016 – 17 this gap had closed whilst both boys and girls also improved their results. Part of this had been through designing activities aimed at boys; for example, girls did better in mathematics so 'muddy maths' had been developed to increase involvement from boys. The gender gap had also decreased at Key Stage 2 and was now below the national average. However, the gap remained larger at Key Stage 4 and SBC would work to resolve this. Meanwhile, the gender gap was negligible for A Levels.

Disadvantaged children were defined as those eligible to receive free school meals (regardless of whether they accepted the offer or not). Whilst fewer disadvantaged EYFS children achieved GLD than their peers, the percentage who did was above average, and the gap between them and their peers was below the national average. However, it was recognised that reporting at EYFS was not complete nationally. Patterns at Key Stage 2 were similar, except the local gap between disadvantaged children and their peers had slightly widened. It was recognised that work was required to rectify this. In comparison, the picture at Key Stage 4 was positive. The issue of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) was complex and would be the subject of a separate agenda item at the next meeting.

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Disadvantaged white British children were the lowest performing ethnic group in Slough at Key Stage 2, with boys attaining considerably lower results than girls. However, those who are not disadvantaged were well above Slough averages; this suggested that disadvantage and gender (not ethnicity) were the key factors. However, at Key Stage 4, non disadvantaged and disadvantaged white British children had the worst Progress 8 scores (in line with national trends). Work was being undertaken with schools on this issue.

Nevertheless, the overall picture at Key Stage 4 was positive. On Attainment 8, Progress 8, the percentage receiving Grade 4 or better in English and mathematics GCSE and the percentage achieving Grade 5 or better in English and mathematics GCSE, Slough was above national averages.

In terms of key developments, the School Effectiveness Team had appointed a Senior Education Liaison Officer. This had helped the Local School Improvement Fund (LSIF) have an impact in schools. There are a significant number of schools working together on collaborative projects, the largest of which is the Primary Vocabulary Project. A School Improvement Board had been formed, which has been able to identify priorities for initiatives in both the primary and secondary phase. A key role of this board is to revise and shape a new School Improvement Strategy document to support schools. The relationship between SBC and local schools has been supported by this, with 5 primary academies that had previously not had a working relationship with SBC now engaged. Other key developments had been the work of sepeate Senior Standards and Effectiveness Officers with primary and secondary schools, the appointment of an equivalent for SEND pupils and the work done on the 14 – 19 agenda mentioned in minute 48.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The role of the local authority in education was always one of partnership rather than enforcement, even prior to the increase in the number of academies. However, despite the high number of such establishments in Slough, the Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) in the area did help co-ordination. The initial period of schools becoming independent had led to some disengagement, but as time had passed so the benefits of co-operation had been appreciated. Whilst 100% engagement is unlikely, SBC would continue to try and expand its network; however, it could not oblige any school to work with it.
- Members welcomed the progress made in the last 2 years and noted the impact of engagement on outcomes for children. The proliferation of forums for discussion had supported this; however, it was also recognised that this process needed to be continued.
- The return of services from Cambridge Education to in-house provision had also helped. All schools had now been visited by SBC since the transfer, whilst the appointment of a permanent Director of Children's Services was also positive. As for the future, it was noted that efforts to help key workers find local housing and the continued expansion of a permanent leadership for the Education Team would ensure progress was maintained.

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- The impact of the partnership between Beechwood and Herschel Grammar School was currently hard to measure given its relative novelty (October 2016). However, it was reported that Herschel was evaluating the suitability of Beechwood's curriculum and that these efforts, alongside other work, were being reported favourably by those involved. However, clarity on the results of this work would need to be awaited.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

50. Joint Parenting Panel Quarterly Update

The report covered the period from December 2017 to March 2018. The body covered the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2016 – 18 and the Joint Care Leavers Strategy 2017, with each meeting conducting a themed discussion. On 13th December 2017 the focus was Priority 2 from the Corporate Parenting Strategy (our LACs and young people will be enabled to reach their educational attainment) and discussed the improved outcomes outlined in the Virtual School Annual Report 2016 – 17. In particular, the rating of the Virtual School from 'inadequate' to 'good' was testimony to its work.

7th February 2018 had been a more informal setting, aimed at helping SBC Councillors to understand their responsibility for corporate parenting and how the Children's Services Trust and SBC could work together to improve outcomes. This had been well received and encouraged positive interaction between the organisations. Finally, 12th February's meeting had focused on Priority 5 (our LACs and young people will be respected and engaged in planning for their future) and received case studies from the Young People's and Housing Services (included as appendices). These had outlined challenging situations where good results had been obtained through sensitive and diligent efforts.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The high turnover in membership of the Joint Parenting Panel was noted, and it was asked if this should be subject to the same 'three strikes' policy which could see scrutiny members removed from committees. However, it was also noted that the high turnover had led to problems with members' availability and Party Groups were advised that this matter may be best managed internally. However, the importance of the support of members and officers in their responsibilities towards LACs was emphasised.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

51. Forward Work Programme

Resolved: That the work programme be noted.

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52. Attendance Record

Cllr Arvind Dhaliwal had not attended three consecutive meetings. However, the Panel were willing to accept that there were extenuating circumstances although the member would be reminded that attendance on 18th April 2018 was now expected.

Resolved: That the attendance record be noted.

53. Date of Next Meeting - 18th April 2018

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.44 pm)