

Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 24 September 2019

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Margaret Bell
Councillor Jonathan Chilvers
Councillor Corinne Davies
Councillor Peter Gilbert
Councillor Daniel Gissane
Councillor Howard Roberts
Councillor Dominic Skinner
Councillor Chris Williams
Councillor Pam Williams

Officers

Ian Budd, Assistant Director - Education Services
Jane Carter, Disability and Professional Practice Manager
Becky Hale, Assistant Director - People
Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People
Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities
Kate Sahota, Commissioning Lead - Health Improvement
Sophie Thompson, Intervention Data and Project Management Officer

Others Present

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Yousef Dahmash (Chair) and Jeff Morgan (Portfolio Holder for Children's Services). An apology was also received from John Coleman, Assistant Director, Children and Families.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. Public Speaking

None

3. Warwickshire School Health & Wellbeing Service

Kate Sahota, Commissioning Lead for Health Improvement introduced this item. As part of its Public Health duties, Warwickshire County Council commissioned a healthy child programme, which was delivered through the School Health and Wellbeing Service (SHWBS) by a third sector organisation, Compass. The SHWBS was confidential and freely available for all school-aged children and young people, their families and carers. It delivered preventative and universal public health programmes in schools across the county, as well as in other locations. The team of school nurses, community staff nurses, healthcare support workers and administrators, operated out of three area administrative hubs. Details were provided of the core SHWBS activities. A needs assessment undertaken in 2014 made 15 key recommendations for the commissioning of the service. The SHWBS had undergone significant change following the previous commissioning exercise.

Of the 15 recommendations, 13 had been implemented fully, with two still being in progress. In addition, an audit had assessed how well the service was delivering against the current specification and the framework of the Healthy Child Programme. Of the 51 areas, there was evidence to demonstrate achievement of 49, with a further two requiring additional evidence. Public Health had completed a comprehensive review of the service delivery model, to establish the impact of the changes and help shape future service delivery as part of the new contract, from 1 November 2019. This had included a public consultation with parents, carers, schools and key stakeholders. Service delivery was monitored through quarterly performance reporting and contract meetings, with annual reports summarising the progress made on key priorities. An example of this was provided in an extract of a previous annual report.

In terms of future service delivery, six priorities had been identified for the commissioning of the new service from 1 November 2019 which concerned:

- Robust communication methods being developed and implemented
- Mental and emotional health and wellbeing
- The rising number of hospital admissions as a result of self-harm
- School readiness
- Positive lifestyle choices
- Revising the service specification to incorporate the recommendations from the most recent national documents relating to commissioning of age 5-19 Public Health Services.

Nationally, six high impact areas had been identified as the most important areas to focus on, in order to maximise positive health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. These were detailed in the report, together with the key elements of the revised service from November 2019, showing the proposed service level and core activities. The service would continue to be

monitored through contract meetings and the publication of annual reports as a continuation of the existing arrangements. The financial implications of the new contract were reported.

The following questions and comments were submitted by members with responses provided as indicated:

- The qualifications of practitioners. These comprised specialist community public health and staff nurses and family intervention workers.
- How the service was publicised and levels of awareness amongst pupils and their parents, for example of how to access the service. Also, whether there were additional services in place for emotional health and wellbeing. There were a variety of ways through which this took place. Examples were the correspondence to parents at the start of the school year (years reception, six and nine), that their child would undertake a health needs assessment and information for school newsletters to publicise such things as dentistry. There were confidential text message services both for pupils and their parents. An update was given on an emotional health and wellbeing lead role which had been in place for two years and was now a core part of the contract.
- Schools had been involved in setting the criteria for the new contract. Further information was sought on how they would be engaged in the outcomes and impact of the revised service. An outline was given of the various methods employed, to ensure good and continued engagement with schools, including teacher interviews, attending meetings and conferences, to seek feedback and understand the challenges faced.
- It was asked if the service was delivered on a school-wide basis or focussed on each pupil requiring support. The questionnaires provided fundamental information to assess the pupil health and wellbeing profile of the school. From this, working with the headteacher or their nominee three annual priorities were agreed for that school. Issues flagged from individual questionnaires were also followed up for that child.
- In terms of safeguarding, it was questioned how this service aligned with others involved in safeguarding. The role of the school nurse included completing a health assessment and to consider whether it was appropriate for the service to attend case conference meetings.
- Detail was requested about how the service sought to ensure pupils were school ready. There had been a successful two-year pilot scheme. Strong relations had been built with those working in early years' services. The service produced literature and sought to ensure a partnership approach with parents and others to ensure their children were school ready.

Resolved

That the Committee notes the progress of the service since 1 November 2015, and the future direction beyond the start of the new contract on 1 November 2019.

4. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Jane Carter, Disability and Professional Practice Manager introduced this item. In April 2019, Cabinet approved the SEND and Inclusion Strategy for the period 2019- 2023. This formed part of the strategic framework of the Warwickshire Education Strategy and replaced the Vulnerable

Learners Strategy 2015-2018. The Strategy was co-produced and identified six priority areas. It was supported by a delivery plan and workstreams involving stakeholders. The strategy had been communicated via meetings and conferences, as well as through the distribution of a leaflet. It was monitored by the SEND and Inclusion Board.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 set out the statutory framework and expectations, which included an expectation regarding education, health and care (EHC) plans. In July 2019, 4,090 children and young people had EHC plans in Warwickshire, which was an increase from 2,781 in 2014. A section of the report outlined performance across the SEND system. It included key activities and performance measures, which were summarised in the report with further information and data provided in an appendix.

The areas reported on were:

- Promoting Inclusion
- Getting it right for learners with high needs (school age)
- Improving health and social care for learners with SEND
- Preparing for adulthood
- Transport
- Workforce development

The report outlined plans for a peer review and an expected inspection of the SEND service. Warwickshire was one of four local authorities in the West Midlands yet to receive its SEND local area inspection. The inspection would take place by March 2021. So far, 45 of 91 inspections had resulted in a 'Written Statement of Action'. The County Council had prepared for its inspection through regular updates to portfolio holders, strategic directors and the SEND & Inclusion Board. The key document for inspection was the local self-evaluation.

This was reviewed on a termly basis by the SEND & Inclusion Board. A peer review had been invited to focus on planning for EHC plans and the preparation for adulthood arrangements. This took place on 19 -20 September 2019. A verbal update was given, and the peer review had provided a useful rehearsal ahead of the inspection. The financial implications were reported. The implementation of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy was from within existing budgets across education, health and social care. The financial pressures on SEND were well documented nationally. The current forecast was that the high needs block was forecast to overspend by £4.3m 2019-06-18 CYP OSC minutes Page 5 of 12 in 2019/20, with a medium-term view that overspend would peak at £13.3m in 2021/22. In the government spending review 2019, a further £700m of funding would be provided nationally for high needs in 2020/21, although detail was awaited on the allocation for Warwickshire.

The Committee was reminded that the SEND Implementation Grant, with a current allocation of £261k over two years, was due to end in March 2020. Following a staffing restructure in Education Services, responsibility for mainstream and SEN transport had been separated. Forecast spend for SEN transport was over £9m. This was resourced from central Council funding, rather than the dedicated schools grant.

The following questions and comments were submitted by members with responses provided as indicated:

- Specialist provision in mainstream schools was a sensitive area. Reference was made to the cost saving measures in the report which would be a concern for parents of children reliant on these services. The County Council was currently an outlier in terms of the amount it spent on independent specialist provision and it was reliant on using such schools away from the county.

The aim was to bring forward needs' assessments earlier and to provide appropriate services within the County. The current specialist education did vary in quality, with one school being deemed inadequate in Ofsted terms.

- Extensive research in 2014 had shown that in general, parents would prefer that their children with additional needs went to the same local school as other local children. This approach had been a key part of the Council's strategy and had been endorsed on several occasions by members. Young children having to travel long distances by taxi to specialist school provision was not helpful. There were gaps in specialist provision in Warwickshire's mainstream schools. Additionally, some of the children currently in county specialist provision, who could be taught in mainstream schools also contributed to the need to use more remote specialist provision. Through resolving this it would reduce demand on the specialist provision, provide an improved service and cost less.

- It was asked if parents from Middlemarch School could meet with members to hear their views of the specialist services provided. The Chair suggested that this be discussed further by the Chair and party spokespeople.

- Officers were asked if the support provided in mainstream schools for those with additional needs was sufficient. The Special Educational Needs coordinator (SENCO) resources in some of the schools were on a part time basis and these specialists had limited capacity. Officers explained the arrangements for training and professional development of these staff and it had been noted that attendance levels at such events was declining. Clear guidance was provided to schools on the requirements they should meet for those with additional needs, such as pupils with autism. This guidance was being reviewed in a co-produced way to accord with the latest national guidelines. Other points were encouraging the use of advocacy and the provision of leaflets and other information to support parents.

- Questions were submitted about performance across the system, acknowledging that there had been some improvements in the last few years. However, there were still long waiting times for children with autism or ADHD to be assessed and placed in education with appropriate support. Communication between the schools and the CAMHS/RISE service could be improved and it was perceived that there was GP capacity for assessment.

These points were acknowledged, but there was no need for a formal diagnosis, before taking action. When a pupil had been identified as having additional needs, there was a requirement for schools to use their best endeavours to make appropriate provision.

- There was a lot of work taking place across the system to develop a new strategy and offer for those with autism and their families. An outline was given of the engagement being undertaken, the need to manage demands for the RISE service and the work between health, schools and education services. In terms of diagnosis, this was provided by the specialist mental health trust, which was at capacity. Whilst this was a national issue, it was being looked at actively for Warwickshire.

- From the school's perspective if they were successful in delivering specialist education services, there were demands for additional placements, which had finance and other resource implications. Assurance was provided that schools would get the support they needed and there was a regular dialogue, particularly where they felt overburdened. Starting from a child centred/needs approach rather than services being planned within available resources was advocated. At a recent Department for Education listening event, the view expressed by many local authorities was that the current funding system wasn't fit for purpose. The aim was for every geography to have at least one specialist resource provision and a good start had been made towards this objective. Reference was also made to educational psychology and the recruitment of a specialist officer. A child centred approach was being taken, but this would vary at each school and where poor practice was identified, it was challenged.

- A question was asked about the County Council's

involvement with the Trinity Catholic School in Leamington and the specialist provision at Peter's Place, which met the needs of learners with complex communication and social interaction difficulties. The County Council commissioned the specialist services and there was a programme of support for the first two years, including a specialist educational psychologist and teaching services. This was to provide development, with the leadership and management being the schools responsibility.

- A number of further concerns were raised regarding the Trinity Catholic School and particularly Peter's Place regarding a lack of teacher job descriptions, concerns about capacity, safeguarding concerns and low staff to student ratios. These issues would be investigated, and the safeguarding concerns needed to be communicated clearly to officers for urgent follow up.
- Financial aspects were raised. It was uncertain how much additional funding would be received by the County Council. The anticipated national allocation was expected to be nearly £800 million. Warwickshire had previously received about one percent of the national allocation. This would address the current deficit, but not meet expected increases in demand. It was not clear if this would be annual additional funding, or a one-off amount. It was confirmed that the SEND transport costs were an additional cost. Reference was made to transport costs generally and whilst challenging, Warwickshire was better placed than many other local authorities.

Resolved

That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the implementation of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy, as set out above.

5. Nuneaton Education Strategy

Ian Budd, Assistant Director for Education Services and Sophie Thompson, Intervention Data and Project Management Officer presented a report on the Nuneaton Education Strategy (NES). This sought to highlight the need for a new approach in raising the aspirations and outcomes for children and young people in Nuneaton. The report 'Performance in Bedworth and Nuneaton Schools' had identified a number of concerns, with extracts being reported. Notably, Nuneaton had the lowest educational performance within the County and the lowest proportion of category A and B schools. Currently 44% of secondary school aged young people attended a school in the town judged by Ofsted to require improvement. Other points concerned the increasing pupil cohorts, the suggestion that some eligible Nuneaton families were not claiming free school meals and concerns regarding primary schools and three secondary schools in Nuneaton. Additionally, the data relating to engagement with the Youth Justice Service and teenage pregnancies were of concern. The key focus of the NES was 'raising aspiration, working together.' A proposed multi-agency approach would have the maximum impact, using the Bradford Education Covenant as a model. That approach sought to mobilise the whole community to play a part in helping young people to succeed in life. In order to maximise opportunity to raise aspiration, linkage with the Transforming Nuneaton Programme Board and regeneration within the town were considered to be key. Three scoping meetings of key stakeholders had begun to work as 'task and finish' groups. The focus of these groups was reported. Progress reports would be provided on a termly basis to the Education Challenge Board and Warwickshire Education Strategy Board. Detailed briefings for elected members were scheduled for September and October. The aims of local education strategies were to increase the wellbeing, aspirations and outcomes for learners.

In Warwickshire this built on the evaluation of previous strategies and initiatives. The importance was stated of effective leadership, networking and collaboration, system leadership roles and sustainability, together with rich data and shared learning. An outline was given of the proposed

actions to reduce the number of underperforming schools. Bespoke solutions were important both in tackling the specific issues faced and giving school leaders and staff a sense of ownership. There were benefits for the wider school workforce where they were equipped, encouraged and successes were celebrated. It was proposed to facilitate conferences, schools working together in small groups and sharing outstanding practice that others could visit and learn from. Actions to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils included working in clusters to share effective multi-agency practice, support for tuition, working with parents and involving pupils in leadership programmes.

The following questions and comments were submitted by members with responses provided as indicated:

- There were concerns about the proportion of pupils attending schools in Bedworth, but especially in Nuneaton that required improvement.
- There had been previous meetings with Marion Plant of the Midlands Academy Trust (MAT) where several assurances had been made, but not delivered. It was considered that a further meeting should be arranged with MAT as a priority, to discuss the concerns at length and with transparency. It was questioned what else the Committee could do to pursue this.
- Officers confirmed that some Nuneaton schools were performing well and there was an opportunity to share good practice. Notwithstanding the positive collaboration work through the NES, the County Council had a duty and would intervene where governance or leadership were required and it did so both with schools and academy trusts.
- The Council didn't have statutory levers, so it worked with and through others including the government, local MPs and the regional school commissioner's office.
- A member replied that this situation had been ongoing for a number of years and needed resolution. • Many of the concerns related to a MAT. An example was quoted where pupil performance had deteriorated from primary to secondary education. Some parents were minded to send their children to schools further afield, for example at Atherstone.
- The level of performance at some of the schools in question was poor, but still above the threshold before intervention could take place, so it was more a case of seeking to influence. There were termly 'keep in touch' meetings with academy trusts as a way of raising concerns.
- There were concerns where some pupils were performing well which masked performance overall.
- Discussion took place about the admission policy requirements and legal basis. Given that parental preference was a key principle in law, the best way to get people to use their local schools was if they were high performing and there was local confidence in them. This was a key driver for the NES.
- There were children in neighbouring in north Warwickshire villages such as Hartshill and Arley and in nearby Galley Common that went to Nuneaton schools, but there had been a lack of communication with north Warwickshire or adjacent Nuneaton borough members about the member briefings which were taking place. Officers would check the invitation list to the briefing session.
- Pupil performance at primary schools was reported as good, so attributing poor performance at secondary schools to family backgrounds wasn't appropriate.
- It was agreed as an action that Marion Plant, Chair of the MAT be asked to attend the Committee to give an update on progress and the priorities going forward. If helpful, the meeting could be held at the MAT. In addition to inviting the Chair of the MAT, it was suggested that the Regional School Commissioners Office be invited to the same meeting to advise members on the thresholds before action could be taken on poor performing schools.

- There was concern that previous assurances from the MAT had not been delivered and members needed to have a clear understanding of the issues and concerns.
- Ian Budd spoke of the roles for all including local members, to ensure that the education provision in Nuneaton was good and that perceptions were improved so people used their local schools. The Council had its own duties, but in terms of MAT governance it could only provide advice and seek to influence, sharing concerns directly at MAT meetings, with the RSC and with central government. It is reliant on government to take formal action.
- School performance data was provided annually and it was planned to bring the latest data to the Committee as part of the annual cycle.
- The NES was welcomed especially for those parents who were reliant on using the schools that were currently failing. A concern was the recent government announcement that Lawrence Sheriff had been turned down as the provider for a new secondary school in the town, given the successes achieved in Rugby. Sharing good practice amongst schools was encouraged as was providing vocational education options. The decision about Lawrence Sheriff had actually been a motivator for senior staff at the Nuneaton schools. • If the NES worked well, it would be rolled out across other parts of Warwickshire.
- The Teachers Representative Panel had a significant understanding of how schools operated. Sean Taylor spoke about the MAT's prescribed methods of tuition. Significant numbers of teachers had left the MAT as a result of this, affecting continuity of teacher for the pupils and there were vacancies at MAT too.
- A member spoke of his own education in Nuneaton, the drivers for learning, dependent on individual strengths, the characteristics of each area, the local challenges for each area and the needs for all children to have a good education.
- Sophie Thompson reported that the Higham Lane School in Nuneaton, judged by Ofsted to be outstanding, had undertaken reviews of practice with challenge at MAT. She added that retention of teachers was a key strand of the NES. In turn this linked to the gathering of inspirational stories to share with young people.
- The importance of teachers was stated. Where schools were in decline, good teachers tended to move elsewhere. A further strand of the NES was the effective recruitment and retention of teachers.
- The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Hayfield noted the palpable frustration amongst members at the lack of improvement in performance at the MAT. It would be helpful if Ofsted revisited poor performing schools more promptly. Most of the endeavours over recent years hadn't worked and officers shared the frustrations voiced by the committee. The NES and proposals in the report were a good way forward. Despite everything, the MAT could act independently and it had autonomy, but it was hoped they would accept the offers of others to help and intervene.
- A positive quotation was made in regard to the improvements being made at the Stockingford Primary School through the introduction of a clear reading policy.

Resolved

That the Committee:

1. Comments as set out above on the proposal to establish a multi-agency Nuneaton Education Strategy, which aligns to the wider Transforming Nuneaton Strategy.
2. Supports that this model, if successful, be rolled out in other areas of the County at a later date (to be agreed upon evaluation of the first year of the Nuneaton Education Strategy in Autumn 2020) where appropriate.

3. That a meeting is convened with the Midlands Academy Trust and the Regional School Commissioner either in Warwick or at the Trust, to further discuss the issues set out above.

6. Question Time

Councillor Gissane asked Councillor Hayfield for an update on the school transport issue raised at the previous meeting. The Portfolio Holder advised that the criteria had been revisited for a number of schools. School transport issues were a significant area which the Committee may wish to revisit, both for mainstream and specialist schools, in terms of cost savings targets. Ian Budd offered to share the learning in terms of transport policy changes. Providing clear communication on entitlement and the dates that applications needed to be submitted by were important aspects. The policy could not be changed fundamentally without formal consultation. There would always be some people that were just outside the area of entitlement for free school transport.

Councillor Gissane advised that some parents were not aware of the transport policy changes. Bus services were charging an annual fee of £400 and pupils could no longer use services on an ad-hoc basis. Ian Budd reiterated the plans to overhaul the information provided via the website to make it clearer.

Councillor Gilbert asked that the relationship and sex education strategy be brought to the Committee, particularly in view of the 'all about me' programme. Reference was also made to the recent workshop delivered and whether this could be repeated for the Committee. It was asked if the delivery of this education requirement was balanced and appropriate.

Nigel Minns provided an update on the recent inaccurate and misleading press reporting of teacher training materials. The press article had described them as teaching materials for children, which was not the case. These materials would never be used for children. The programme was evidence-based and in accord with national guidelines, being broadly similar to the programme run successfully for the previous six years. The Council had decided to further review these resources and temporarily removed them from its website. A further briefing for members after this review would be appropriate.

Councillor Gilbert spoke of the need to look at this educational tool to ensure it was not too broad, that it was delivered appropriately, consistently and at the right time. It was agreed that the item would come back to the Committee. Councillor Hayfield wanted to ensure that teachers were happy with the training materials too. It was important to get this area of teaching correct. There was a process of consultation and rigorous training for staff delivering the subject. Officers would advise when the review had been completed. Councillor Skinner advised that a headteacher and her family had been threatened as a result of the misleading press article. Officers confirmed that there was continued support for the member of staff on a daily basis from both the Council and other agencies.

Sean Taylor asked for an update on the mental health trailblazer programme. Becky Hale understood that the trailblazer training had been delivered and she would provide a written update after the meeting. Mr Taylor also wanted to get some momentum for the workload charter, which was a way of demonstrating to staff that a school was a good place to work. There had been a number of challenges last year and as a result a low take up of the charter. The next round of the charter was due to start after the half term break and he wished to ensure that it was publicised appropriately. Ian Budd confirmed that staff wellbeing was a key aspect for the Council. The

publication 'Heads Up' was for staff and any other person could sign up to it too. It contained many examples of wellbeing initiatives and shared good practice.

Updates from Cabinet Portfolio Holders/Heads of Service

There were no updates

7. One Organisational Plan Quarterly Progress Report

Nigel Minns introduced this item. The One Organisational Plan (OOP) quarterly performance progress report for the period 1 April to 30 June 2019 was considered and approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 12 September 2019. That report provided an overview of progress of the key elements of the OOP, in relation to performance against key business measures (KBMs), strategic risks and workforce management. A separate financial monitoring report for the period covering both the revenue and capital budgets, reserves and delivery of the savings plan was presented and considered at the same Cabinet meeting.

This report focussed on information extracted from both Cabinet reports to provide the information relevant to this Committee's remit. A strategic context and performance commentary was provided. Of the 58 KBMs, 12 were in the remit of the committee. At the quarter one position, 75% (9) of KBMs were currently on track and achieving target and there were several measures reported where performance was of particular note. Two KBMs were not on track and behind target. However, both were projected to be improving over the next reporting period. A section of the report presented KBMs where significant good performance or areas of concern needed to be highlighted. Performance for all other measures was included in an appendix. The relevant finance information from the Cabinet report was also provided, both for revenue and capital, detailing the performance thresholds and delivery of the 2017- 20 savings plan.

The following questions and comments were submitted, with responses provided as indicated:

- Councillor Davies asked for an update on recruitment and retention of social workers and whether anything else could be done to assist with this. Nigel Minns advised that Warwickshire had the best data on social workers in the West Midlands, with the fewest agency staff and lowest number of vacancies. The turnover rate hadn't improved significantly in the last year but was much improved on previous years. A new social worker retention strategy had been introduced recently.
- Councillor Chilvers asked about the average numbers of caseloads per social worker, which had reduced from 19.8 in June to 18.8 currently. The case volume did decrease at this time of year as newly qualified social workers commenced casework.

8. Work Programme

Members noted the work programme as submitted.

9. Any Urgent Items

The Committee recorded its thanks to Janet Purcell for her support and wished her well for the future.

10. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting would take place at 10.00 am on 24 September 2019, Shire Hall, Warwick.

The Committee rose at 12:20 p.m.

..... Chair