

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 7 September 2016 at 5.30pm in the Ernest Saville Room - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.30pm
Concluded 8.00 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
BM Smith Rickard Cooke	Warburton Duffy Arshad Hussain Watson	J Sunderland

Councillor Arshad Hussain in the Chair

Observers: Councillors Dunbar, Hinchcliffe and V Slater

23. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillors Cooke and Sunderland declared a prejudicial interest on the item relating to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Leeds City Region (Minute 29) as they were both members of the Combined Authority and they left the meeting during consideration of the item.

24. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2016 be signed as a correct record.

25. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.



26. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to this Committee.

27. CHILDREN'S SERVICES INTERIM REPORT ON CURRENT BUDGET PRESSURE AND STEPS BEING MADE TO ADDRESS THESE PRESSURES

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the First Quarter Financial Position Statement for 2016-17 at its meeting on the 20 July 2016. The Committee requested for an interim report and the report from the Strategic Director Children's Services (**Document "K"**) explained the reasons for the budget pressures in the current year and steps being taken to address them.

The Strategic Director and the Assistant Director Social Care gave a brief presentation setting out the 'journey of a child' and the related expenditure incurred by Children's Services, to give Members an understanding and context to the spend and the budget pressures within the Service.

During a detailed presentation the following information was alluded to:

- That Bradford was the fourth largest metropolitan district area in the country.
- That Bradford had the fastest growing youth population in the UK which added to the budget pressures going forward.
- That the provision of services was backed by a statutory, legislative obligation.
- That the Council's ambition for young people was stipulated in the Children Plan – ensuring every child reaches their full potential.
- That the service employed 176 social workers and 415 unqualified social workers.
- That the service received over 30,000 telephone calls a year, resulting in 5,700 actual referrals.
- That 1,250 children had been identified as being in need to date, resulting in 525 requiring a child protection plan.
- That the 890 looked after children was a key area of expenditure.
- That the number of looked after children in Bradford mirrored the national average.
- That looked after children needed accommodating in a myriad of placements which were governed by need and supply.
- That children that required placement were either placed with family and friends or in foster care.
- That some children had a degree of complexity and they could not be placed in a foster care setting and were placed in a residential setting, which cost in the region of £2,500 per child, per week.
- That some children with complex needs were placed in Independent fostering arrangements at a cost of £1,400 per week, per child.
- That some children had to be placed in external residential settings which



could cost £3,500 per child, per week of which there were currently 48 children placed in such a setting.

- In addition 4 children had been placed in secure accommodation, costing in the region of £5,000 per week.
- A number of children were supported through a Special Guardianship Order of which there were currently 279 children.
- That 260 children who had been adopted were still being supported by the service in some capacity, given their needs.
- That in the context of a growing young population at the current rate, it was expected that this would add an additional £1.3m spend to the annual expenditure of the Service.
- That some additional pressures was being experienced from the newly arrived communities.
- That tackling Child Sexual Exploitation was a key priority and the response to it was second to none.
- That the district was being asked by Government to take on more unaccompanied asylum seekers which would come with its own designated funding.
- That Ofsted expectations continue to increase and that put additional pressures on the service.
- That going forward the development and work of the early offer hub and early help team would help to reduce pressure and dependency on the Service as well and ensuring appropriate, timely advice and help was provided at the outset.
- That all external residential placements would be reviewed in due course as well as fostering fees and allowances.

During the discussion Members asked a number of questions, the questions together with the responses are detailed below:

In relation to a question regarding unit costs, it was explained that costs were dependent on circumstances and that a number of people were accessing the Service and cost could not be controlled in this context, particular with the increase in the number of CSE cases, only added to cost pressures.

The Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder also explained that cost within most Local Authority Children's Services was escalating and the level of our overspend in Bradford was favourable compared to other comparable local authorities, as that there was a shift to streamline the service and review cases to ensure value for money was maintained.

In response to a question regarding the review being undertaken regarding Special Guardianship Orders and Foster Carer fees and allowances, it was stressed that the rates given to Foster Carers differed depending on need, and a review was being conducted which would be completed around March 2017 on Foster Carer rates.

In relation to a question on the proposed primary contact point and how it was going to work in practice, it was explained that currently the children's contact point handled around 30,000 calls a year, with a number resulting in



assessments. The vision was to have early help teams in place which would work closely with our Education, Health and Police partners to provide speedy support to families when the initial contact is made, and thereby reducing demand on the service and directing resources where they were most needed.

A Member stated that in relation to fostering, reducing the fees paid to foster carers was a national trend and causing an issue, whereas there was need for more foster carers and for them to take on additional responsibilities, so the reduction could be detrimental in this context. In response it was acknowledged that foster carers should be paid a good level of remuneration, and although fee allowances had been changed last year to iron out some anomalies in the system, Bradford still paid at a level which was generous compared to other Local Authorities and that it was important to get the balance right between attracting new carers and retaining existing ones.

The Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder stressed that any changes to foster care fees and allowances will endure an extensive consultation process and ensure that there is minimal impact on the child.

In response to a question on what the service was doing to ensure more and more children that required care remained within the extended family setting, it was explained that the main reasons for a child being taken into care was due to domestic violence, substance misuse or mental health issues and that the extended family was generally seen as the first port of call and the main focus of the social work team.

The Strategic Director Children's Services added that in relation to strengthening the foster care system there was a need to better promote the service and its key message, and make fostering more attractive as well as celebrate the lives of the children in care and tackle negative stereotypes.

In response to a question on setting too ambitious a target and how we then monitored this, it was acknowledged that reducing the number of children in care was an ambitious target and there was need to closely monitor the situation. In addition this had to be managed in the context of reduced resources and our statutory responsibilities.

The Portfolio Holder stressed the need to have challenging targets, but that in social care there was a conundrum on how we achieve our objectives with less resources at our disposal.

In response to a question on how reconfiguring and redesigning the initial help and assistance would achieve savings, it was stressed that the if the early help offer is effective, a reduction in the demand for services could follow and a fall in the number of children requiring care provision, as well as freeing up social worker time to deal with more complicated cases. This model was already in operation in North Yorkshire and the service was confident in making inroads.

No resolution was passed on this item.



28. ADULT SOCIAL CARE INTERIM REPORT ON CURRENT BUDGET PRESSURE AND STEPS BEING MADE TO ADDRESS THESE PRESSURES

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the First Quarter Financial Position Statement for 2016-17 on the 20 July 2016. The report forecasted an over spend of £3.5 million in respect of Adult Social Care and the Committee resolved to receive a report from the Interim Strategic Director of Adults.

In response the Interim Strategic Director Adult and Community Services submitted a report (**Document “L”**) which explained the reasons for the budget pressures. It was stressed that the risk in delivering the 2016/17 budget cuts forecasted to be £2.6m was linked primarily to reducing the numbers of older people placed into institutional settings and the cost of care for people with complex support need.

In an effort to try and reduce the overspend, the key focus was on reducing the time spent in residential / nursing care and give people more opportunities to stay in their own home. In addition Bradford had been successful in ensuring no one was placed outside of the district.

A Member stated that the long term prognosis was that the people needing support would increase year on year and savings had to be made at the same and he ascertained what measures were in place to educate people about lifestyle changes. In response the Interim Strategic Director stated that a lot of work was being done around early intervention work and lifestyle changes and encouraging people to stay active as well as take greater responsibility for their own care, which would reduce the need for care as people got older.

The Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder also confirmed that these issues had also been discussed with our health partners around self care and closer working to achieve objectives.

The Interim Strategic Director stated that he was hopeful that the budget deficit would be reduced and brought back in line with the approved spend for the Service.

No resolution was passed on this item.

29. UPDATE REPORT ON WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY (WYCA) AND LEEDS CITY REGION ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (LEP)

The Strategic Director Regeneration submitted a report (**Document “M”**) which set out the progress, plans and performance for West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as it entered its second full year of operations. The report included details on regeneration, transport, public service reform and governance. It also described this work in relation to the priorities, challenges and opportunities for Bradford District.



This report focused on the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) remit and the WYCA/LEP relationships with and support to Council policy, ambitions, priorities and resources. This report aimed to provide an overview of WYCA/LEP and key issues for Committee and member consideration. It was not a fully comprehensive review of WYCA/LEP. This Committee previously considered WYCA/LEP at its meeting on 8 September 2015.

During the discussion a Member ascertained what the critical factors were between the WYCA and the LEP. In response the Strategy and Engagement Officer explained that the work of the LEP had been brought into the work of the Combined Authority.

In relation to a question regarding staffing levels and work of the WYCA, it was stressed that the Combined Authority had inherited a number of functions and that it worked in close collaboration with Councils across the regions to ensure scheme delivery and that adequate staffing levels were in place.

The Leader stressed the need to remodel services so that they were area appropriate, particularly in the area of housing policy where a more focussed regional policy was required.

In response to a question on the impact on the work of the WYCA following the EU referendum, the Strategy and Engagement Officer stated that the LEP board had looked at the economic outlook for the area following the decision to leave the EU, as well as the key risks and challenges facing the region particularly in the sphere of European funding and business support.

The Strategy and Engagement Officer also stressed that the minutes of the WYCA meetings were now published with the Executive agenda papers.

Resolved –

That a progress report on the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership be presented to this Committee in 6 months time.

ACTION: Strategic Director Regeneration

30. ANNUAL REPORT FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2015-16

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document “N”**) which presented the Draft Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report for 2015-16.

Members expressed their thanks to officers across the Council that had submitted detailed reports to the respective Scrutiny Committees over the



year, and also for the detailed Scrutiny Reviews that had been undertaken in a number of areas.

Resolved –

- (1) That the proposed Annual Report be adopted.**
- (2) That the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report for 2015-16 be referred to Council for consideration.**
- (3) That officers be thanked for the work undertaken, especially relating to the Poverty and Flooding Scrutiny Reviews.**

ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Lead/ City Solicitor (Resolution 2)

31. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document “O”**) which set out the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2016/17.

Resolved –

That the work programme 2016-17 continues to be reviewed regularly during the year.

ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THIS AGENDA AND ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER

