

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 17 January 2017.

PRESENT: Councillors J Sharrocks (Chair), T Mawston (Vice-Chair), J G Cole, E Dryden, A Hellaoui, C Hobson, L Lewis, J McGee, L McGloin, J A Walker and M Walters

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillor J Brunton - Executive Member for Education and Skills

OFFICERS: B Carr

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillor T Higgins, Councillor D Rooney.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None Declared

16/48 MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 13 DECEMBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 13 December 2016 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

16/49 ATTENDANCE OF EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AT THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

The Democratic Services Officer submitted a report to provide information in respect of the scheduled attendance of Members of the Executive at the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB). It was intended for Executive Members to provide updates on their respective work in terms of their aims, aspirations, objectives, priorities and any emerging issues.

The Chair welcomed Councillor J Brunton, the Executive Member for Education and Skills, to the meeting.

The Executive Member advised the Board as follows:-

- Weekly meetings were held with the Director of Children's Services and fortnightly meetings with Assistant Directors that were connected to the Education and Skills portfolio. There was some cross over between the portfolios for the Executive Member for Children's Social Care and the Executive Member for Communities and Public Health which included school readiness, early years, libraries and literacy and as a consequence, the Executive Member held regular meetings with the two Executive Members. Six weekly meetings were held to discuss issues surrounding virtual schools which were schools that aided educational achievement for Looked After Children (LAC).
- The authority was currently looking at education for children, particularly those that lived out of the area.
- The Executive Member regularly attended the School Management Forum which provided an opportunity for all Head Teachers and private nurseries to discuss matters such as funding support and other challenges.
- The Executive Member was also currently the Chair of the School Standards Monitoring Group. The Board was advised that If schools were not meeting their targets, the matter would be discussed with the appropriate Head Teacher or members of staff to see what could be put in place in order to support the school to raise achievement. The Chair of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel also attended this meeting.
- The Executive Member was also a School Governor at Acklam Grange, Complementary Education and Kings Academy and as part of her role as Executive Member, schools were visited on a regular basis.
- Attended seminars and conferences in the role of Executive Member.
- Member of Literacy Trust Steering Group. Attended workshops where Members took their favourite books.
- Schools paid for benches and had them painted as children's characters. Currently

- trying to obtain funding for benches around the town.
- The Executive Member advised that literacy levels in Middlesbrough were low and assistance was needed to help deal with the issue. A report was due to be submitted to the Executive Committee with regard to strategies on how to improve literacy.
- Chair of RTMAT (PRU) - the Executive Member provided an explanation with regard to Multi Academy Trusts;

It was commented that some of the parents in Middlesbrough were unable to read. The Executive Member advised that a number of schools held parents groups to assist parents to read/write and learn maths. Community Learning were currently facilitating these groups. The Job Centre also arranged for adults to attend employability courses which assisted adults with reading and writing and to help adults learn the skills required to apply for jobs.

A Member suggested that book swaps could be arranged and different nationalities could be encouraged to be involved. The Executive Member advised that she would raise the issue at the next Literacy Trust meeting.

A member queried how many schools were offering literacy skills lessons for parents and she requested figures on the take-up. The Executive Member advised that from her experience it was mainly primary schools.

The Board was advised that Middlesbrough primary school results were not as good as expected. Some of the children entered school at a low base and had failed to catch up. The department had submitted a bid to enable the authority to look at how it could improve achievement. A consultation was currently underway in relation to bringing school specialists in to various primary schools to improve literacy. It was highlighted that there were lots of outstanding teachers in Middlesbrough but there was a reluctance to let teachers move around. Some schools were taking on specialist staff to deal with non-education issues to allow the teachers to concentrate on educating the children. There had been some improvement in primary schools however there had been a big change in the curriculum so it was anticipated this could have a detrimental effect on the improvement in outcomes.

A member queried with regard to what mechanisms had been put in place to evaluate whether being a part of a Multi Trust was beneficial. The Executive Member advised that some Multi Trust Academies appeared to work well but others were not as effective. Officers would ask the question when visiting schools, but the way in which a Multi Trust Academy worked was usually down to the standard of teaching and best practice.

The results of secondary schools had improved the previous year. Consultants had been invited into the schools to look at teaching methods. It was anticipated that the results for the coming year would not be as positive as the previous year and there was no further funding available to employ consultants. Support was being offered from the local authority and schools were being requested to share best practice and training. If academies were not making progress then the academies division could be informed. The academies division provided feedback to the local authority on any issues in relation to academies that the local authority had raised.

A member requested further information in respect of virtual schools. The Executive Member advised that virtual schools aided educational achievement for Looked After Children (LAC). The team were experienced professionals who liaised with other agencies in order to improve academic excellence for LAC in Middlesbrough. They provided a consistent educational point of contact to ensure that the child's progress was tracked. LAC in Middlesbrough were performing better than the national average.

In response to a query with regard to whether teachers from different schools visited other schools, the Executive Member advised that teachers sometimes visited a school for an afternoon of professional development and it provided them with an opportunity to speak to other staff. Very few schools allowed their staff to spend longer periods in other schools but this was subject to consultation. Some schools had cameras in the classroom which enabled other teachers to view individual lessons. Some academies had teachers that visited multi trusts on a rotation basis.

In response to a query with regard to the evaluation of school improvement, it was commented that exam results were often used as a parameter but schools moderated exams in different ways. A member queried whether other aspects of school life were used in assessing the success of schools. The Executive Member advised that the Government looked at school attainment.

There was currently high levels of absence in some schools and the number of exclusions was relatively high. The Executive Member requested the Overview and Scrutiny Board to arrange for a scrutiny investigation into school exclusions.

A member queried with regard to what happened if a pupil was excluded and was transferred to a Pupil Referral Unit. The Executive Member advised that pupils ideally should only spend a short time at a Pupil referral Unit but some schools were reluctant to take a child back into school. From September to December the number of pupils had doubled from the previous year. Excluded pupils who were not able to be placed in a Pupil Referral Unit were entitled to a few hours home tuition a day. The ratio at Pupil Referral Units was greater because of the complexity of the issues of the pupils attending. Pupil Referral Units staff usually included teaching staff, a teaching assistant and a member of staff to deal with behavioural issues. The classes in Pupil referral Units were usually smaller and lessons were shorter and any time taken out of class by a pupil had to be made up.

Some schools provided additional support to pupils on their return from the Pupil Referral Unit but this was dependant on the resources available in individual schools.

A meeting was to be held with the Head of the Pupil Referral Unit to look at the system for exclusions. One proposal was that each school would be allowed a set number of exclusions per year and would have to pay towards any pupil exceeding the schools set amount. If the proposal was to go ahead, all secondary schools would have to agree.

There was currently a waiting list for the Pupil Referral Units. The problem was prevalent in Middlesbrough because of issues with mental health problems and alcohol and drug misuse. There was currently not enough agencies available to deal with the high level of excluded pupils. The Tees Valley authorities had submitted a bid for a Free School in Middlesbrough which could alleviate some of the issues. The school if agreed would be a new build and could be based across two sites.

In terms of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), if a child did not wish to go to CAMHS, their name was removed from the list. Some schools employed their own staff to provide counselling as there had been issues in recruiting Educational Psychologists.

A consultation was ongoing which was looking at reducing funding in schools and for some schools in Middlesbrough, it would have a huge impact. The issue had been raised at the Schools Management Forum and it had been agreed that the Government should be lobbied on this issue. The local member of Parliament had also agreed to raise the issue in Parliament. Primary schools in Middlesbrough were struggling with funding issues and some were holding events to raise funding for school books.

A member commented that the Government were trying to make funding more even across schools in the country and some schools were receiving additional funding. The Executive Member commented that the formula for school funding was not correct and local authorities were lobbying to get it changed.

The Executive Member advised that the portfolio for Education and Skills also had responsibility for Community Learning.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for her contribution to the meeting.

ORDERED that a scrutiny investigation into the topic of school exclusions be arranged.

- POTHOLE REPAIR

The Vice-Chair of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel outlined the Scrutiny Panel's main findings, conclusions and recommendations following a scrutiny investigation of the topic of Pothole Repair.

The Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel recommended to the Executive:

- a) That a planer, and either bobcat or JCB 3CX attachment is purchased from the Capital Expenditure Programme.
- b) That Middlesbrough's Executive Director of Economic Development and Communities makes a formal enquiry to the Tees Valley Combined Authority regarding the joint purchase of a Jet Patcher machine.

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board queried how effective the repair would be and whether the purchase of the equipment would be cost effective. A member advised that repairs carried out by a planer would result in a more permanent repair. In response to a query with regard to whether any nearby authorities had a planer machine, it was explained that one authority had trialled the machine.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board suggested that some of the information contained in the minutes be extracted and inserted into the Final Report. It was suggested that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board, the Vice-Chair of Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel and the Democratic Services Officer meet to discuss the content of the report.

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board advised that she had concerns regarding the revised format of Final Reports and had met with the Chief Executive to discuss those concerns. All Scrutiny Panel Chairs were requested to send copies of any Draft Final Reports to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board prior to submission to the Board.

In response to a query whether any guidance would be provided regarding the content of Draft Final reports the Chair advised that Democratic Services would provide assistance. A member pointed out that the Final Report was the report of the Scrutiny Panel and there was an issue with regard to resources surrounding the new generic roles in Democratic Services.

A Member queried whether press releases should be written in respect of each Final Report. The Chair advised that it was intended for meetings to be held with the press office prior to each Scrutiny Final report being released.

ORDERED as follows:

1. That the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board, the Vice-Chair of Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel and the Democratic Services Officer meet to discuss the content of the Pothole Repair Final report, prior to resubmission to the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
2. That the possibility of reinstating Press meetings prior to the release of Scrutiny Final reports be investigated.

16/51 EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive submitted a report which identified the forthcoming issues to be considered by the Executive as outlined in Appendix A to the report.

The report provided the Overview and Scrutiny Board with the opportunity to consider whether any item contained within the Executive Forward Work Programme should be considered by the Board or referred to a Scrutiny Panel.

NOTED

16/52 SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS REPORTS

The Chair of Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel provided Members with an update in respect of the Panel's current topic of kinship carers/connected persons. The Board was advised that the Final Report was in the process of being drafted.

The Vice-Chair of Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel advised that the panel were currently investigating the topic of the regeneration of Linthorpe Road.

The Chair of Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel provided the Board with an update in respect of the Panel's current topic of Safeguarding Adults. The Board was advised that the Independent Chair of the Tees Safeguarding Adults Board had attended the previous meeting of the panel. The Final Report in respect of this topic was currently being drafted.

The Chair of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel provided the Board with an update in respect of the Panel's current topic of Sextortion. A number of members were due to receive training before going into schools to discuss sextortion.

The Board was advised that the Panel's Final Report in respect of Street Beggars was due to be submitted to the Executive for approval. The next meeting of the Panel would be held in the Wellbeing Centre.

The Chair of Health Scrutiny Panel provided the Board with an update in respect of the Panel's current topic of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD).

In respect of the panel's work on the topic of Radiology Services it was advised that the Breast Radiology Unit at James Cook University Hospital (JCUH) had been out of use for approximately 18 months. South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundations Trust had had difficulties in recruiting Radiologists and patients were currently travelling to the University of North Tees Hospital for diagnosis. Treatment was still being delivered at JCUH but there was a real need to reopen the unit. The panel was advised that the unit was scheduled to reopen on 1st July 2017.

Confirmation had also been received that the walk-in health centres at North Ormesby and Eston Grange medical centre in South Bank would close in March next year in order to pay for extended, seven day access to GP services.

The Better Health Programme regional meeting had taken place on the 19th January 2017. Representatives of the Better Health Programme gave a presentation to the Joint Committee advising Members of the latest information regarding workforce considerations and service modelling. An independent analysis report of the Phase 4 Better Health Programme engagement events was also considered.

An update on the review of health funded respite care for adults with a Learning Disability and complex needs was provided at the last meeting of the South Tees Joint Health Scrutiny Committee. Members requested that a special meeting of the Committee be organised in February / March to consider the Sustainable Transformation Plan for Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgfield, Darlington, Tees, Hambleton, Richmondshire & Whitby.