

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Wednesday 11 May 2022.

**PRESENT:** Councillors M Saunders (Chair), A Bell, D Davison, C Hobson, D McCabe, C McIntyre, J Platt, M Storey, J Thompson, S Walker, B Hubbard and T Higgins

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** T Grainge (Executive Member for Neighbourhood Safety), L Mason (Executive Member for Young Adults and Democratic Engagement) and Z Uddin

**OFFICERS:** C Breheny, S Butcher, S Blood, C Cannon, R Brown, G Field, T Dunn, D Metcalfe and I Wright

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors T Mawston (Vice Chair) and A Hellaoui

20/89 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

20/90 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 27 APRIL 2022**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 27 April 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/91 **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**

20/92 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE**

The Chief Executive was not in attendance and prior to the meeting the Chair had agreed for this item to be deferred to the next meeting.

**NOTED**

20/93 **EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE**

The Executive Member for Young Adults and Political Engagement, Cllr Luke Mason, was in attendance to update the Board on his aims and aspirations, progress made to date and to highlight any emerging issues relating to his portfolio. The Director of Legal and Governance, the Executive Director of Children's Services and the Director of Education and Partnerships were also in attendance.

The Executive Member opened by thanking the Board for the invite and advised that he would highlight some of the key areas he had been working on, as well as some of the emerging issues relating to his portfolio. During the presentation the following key points were made:-

- The role was split into two different parts, the first covered political participation in the town, with a focus on increasing the number of voters during elections and the second focussed on ensuring that all young adults in Middlesbrough had access to the support they needed when leaving school and accessing further education,

- employment and apprenticeships.
- There were numerous barriers to political participation including political apathy, distrust and lack of understanding. Lack of understanding in terms of how the Council worked and the role of the local Councillors. In an effort to address this deficit a document was being produced to detail the work of the Council, the roles undertaken by Councillors and Officers and how the Council operates. The document would cover a number of topics including general information on the history of the town, the type of local authority Middlesbrough was, the scale and statutory responsibilities of the Council in relation to adults and children's services, information in respect of elections and the role of Councillors both in their wards and for the town more generally, as well as outlining the Council's political balance and the role and benefit of the Council's scrutiny panels. The document would hopefully encourage more people to watch the scrutiny panel / council meetings and have an understanding of the role undertaken by the Mayor and the Executive Members.
- The document would contain information in respect of full Council, how meetings operated and explained the role of the Council's Constitution, the Local Plan and the Council's Tree Policy. It had also been important to provide information on the role of the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and how the Council worked in partnership with the TVCA.
- The document was apolitical and factual and would be presented to Full Council at a future date.
- Reference was made to the appointment process for Middlesbrough's Youth Parliament Member and the work involved in the recent count process, which had been really interesting.
- The Executive Member advised that he was keen to expand the powers of the Youth Parliament in Middlesbrough, as Youth Parliaments provided a great opportunity for young people to be involved in politics. It was felt that motions passed in Youth Council should be brought forward to full Council. In some local authorities Youth Council representatives were also involved in the scrutiny process, which could be a further area to explore in terms of increasing and capturing the voice of young people in Middlesbrough.
- Often young people did not have the opportunity to express their views in a formal environment and the Youth Parliament would help young people to gain access to politics.
- Apprenticeships also had a key role in developing young people and work was being undertaken in Middlesbrough to explore all avenues for increasing the number of apprenticeships available. Reference was made to the social value contractors provide and it was advised that with regard to the Boho X development in awarding the contract the Council had ensured that 12 work experience weeks had been provided, 6 careers advice and guidance events had been held, 200 training weeks had been delivered and two project initiated apprenticeships had been created. There was a need to expand these types of opportunities as much as possible.
- Young people also deserved to be given the best opportunities possible and local education providers were key to this delivery.

Following the update, Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member of the Board queried how the Executive Member could take on a role that involved political engagement when he had an interest in one particular political party and whether or not his undertaking of the role could be viewed as biased. In response the Executive Member advised that in his view there was a clear separation between the two and that it would be deeply unprofessional not to distinguish between party political actions and actions undertaken in the role of Executive Member for political engagement.

Reference was made to Middlesbrough's Looked After Children and whether the Executive Member had undertaken any specific work to ensure that children leaving the care system in Middlesbrough were receiving all of the support they needed to access education, employment and training. In response the Executive Member advised that although he was not the Executive Member for Children's Services he had liaised with the relevant officers and would endeavour to develop a stronger understanding of this area.

It was queried whether Councillors had been consulted in respect of the document detailing the work of the Council, as discussed by the Executive Member, as although reference had been made to the role of ward Councillors each ward was very different. The document was

non-specific and a number of ward Councillors had been consulted during the preparation of the document.

In response to a query regarding the possibility of the Youth Council having a small degree of budgetary responsibility the Executive Member welcomed this suggestion and advised that consideration would be given to this issue.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Young Adults and Political Engagement and the relevant Directors for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhood Safety, Cllr Tony Grainge, was in attendance to update the Board on his aims and aspirations, progress made to date and to highlight any emerging issues relating to his portfolio. The Director of Environment and Commercial Services and the Operational Community Safety Manager were also in attendance.

The Executive Member opened by thanking the Board for the invite and advised that he would highlight some of the key areas he had been working on, as well as some of the emerging issues relating to his portfolio. During the presentation the following key points were made:-

- In terms of the Executive Member's background and suitability for the role the Executive Member advised that he had started volunteering in the community in 2003 at Beechwood Youth Club and St Agnes Church. In 2004 he commenced university and studied Youth Studies, completing his dissertation on why do young people commit crime? The Executive Member advised that he had always been interested in how do we make Middlesbrough a safer place? And how does the Council help communities become more resilient and empower themselves, within the limited financial resources available.
- Crime, the fear of crime and the concept that no-one cares was a real issue that the Council and the Police needed to tackle, as often victims felt powerless and alone.
- Reporting back to the community, as well as the wider town on the action being taken by the various authorities, for example, 37 arrests in Hemlington in March followed by 29 arrests in April, was particularly important and improvements were needed in this area.
- The Council, Thirteen, the Police and the Fire Brigade were working collectively to improve publicity and it was extremely important for teenagers in Middlesbrough to know that there would be consequences for those that committed any crime or anti-social behaviour.
- Reference was made to the 6 steps / 6 stages response initiated by the Council's Neighbourhood Safety Officers in cases where a young person was found to be committing anti-social behaviour.

Stage 1 – First warning letter, advising of the 6 stages

Stage 2 – Second warning letter and Police involvement

Stage 3 – An Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) drafted, outlining certain and specific boundaries

Stage 4 - Breach, court informed

Stage 5 - Final warning, pre-legal meeting

Stage 6 - Criminal Behaviour Order, if broken it would lead to a criminal conviction

- Parenting and positive role models were a huge factor in a young person's upbringing and some parents really struggled. Reference was made to an organisation called Safe Families, which worked alongside parents to support and advise them, as well as provide respite. The Executive Member expressed the view that he was extremely keen to be promote the involvement of Safe Families in supporting more children across the town.
- Locality working would be introduced in Hemlington, with work to be undertaken directly from the Viewley Hill Centre. Locality working had proved effective in Newport and North Ormesby and it was hoped this could be replicated in Hemlington.
- Many young people in Hemlington had expressed a desire to have a boxing club in their area and through collaborative working it was anticipated that this idea would soon come to fruition. The establishment of a Hemlington Boxing Gym would be great for discipline, respect, fitness and mental health and the best youth work often took place in very local communities.
- The provision of CCTV had more than doubled in recent years, between January

2021 and January 2022 provision had increased by 113 per cent. Rapid deployment cameras were also used regularly in hot spot areas and funding had been secured to further increase CCTV provision.

- The need for residents to continue to report all instances of crime and anti-social behaviour was emphasised, as resources were targeted in response to need.
- The good stories were important to report and a good neighbour award would be launched in 2022 to highlight the huge community spirit across the town, which far outweighed the negatives.

In response to a query the Executive Member advised that he would be very happy to meet with Members on an individual basis to talk about specific issues in their area.

It was queried whether an increase in CCTV could be viewed as a positive when there should not be a need to have it installed in the first place. It was advised that CCTV served a number of purposes, part of its role was to act as a deterrent and knowing that if crime was committed it was likely to be caught on camera also helped reduce the fear of crime. The majority of people welcomed the addition of additional CCTV cameras, although it was acknowledged that it would be better if it was not needed.

The Director of Environment and Commercial Services advised that generally anti-social behaviour was down across the town, although of course Hemlington was an exception to that and there had been some very serious incidents. The work undertaken with Cleveland Police, Cleveland Fire Brigade, Thirteen and other Social Landlords in Hemlington would bear fruit about how the Council replicated that work across the rest of the town. Over the last six months there had been a significant change in the approach taken by Cleveland Police in respect of their involvement and focus. It was expected that this would be reflected across the town and the rest of the town would not be neglected. Environmental anti-social behaviour was also reducing and significant action was being taken across the town to ensure that fly-tipping and issues of anti-social behaviour were addressed.

The view was expressed that it was reassuring that an Executive Member had been appointed with specific responsibility for neighbourhood safety and the work undertaken to date was appreciated.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Safety and the relevant Officers for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

**AGREED** that the information provided be noted.

20/94

## **SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS: FEEDBACK FROM SCHOOL VISITS**

The Chair advised that a number of Board Members had taken part in a recent visit to Kings Academy and the following feedback was provided by those Members involved:-

- The school provided 80-90 special educational needs and disability (SEND) placement and these included placements for children with visual and hearing impairments.
- A comprehensive discussion was held on exclusions and it was emphasised that the school undertook every measures possible prior to excluding any of their pupils. Kings rarely received any complaints from parents in respect of exclusions, as the school worked extremely closely with parents from an early stage and therefore they fully understood that all measures had been taken to try and keep their child in school.
- There were numerous causes that led to poor behaviour by pupils and this was especially problematic currently with the high levels of crime and antisocial behaviour taking place in Hemlington. Some children did not feel safe to go out on an evening and these issues were well documented. The school tried hard to work with the Police, however, feedback was poor and improvements were needed.
- The response from the NHS did not match demand and the CAMHS service was too slow to respond to the needs of children and young people.
- Kings had established a separate class for those young people at risk of exclusion and this was proving effective. However, to date there had been 4 permanent exclusions in 2021/2022 as a result of persistent poor behaviour.
- Literacy levels were 60 per cent below the expected level and a significant amount of

work was being undertaken by the school in an effort to address this issue.

- The visit was impressive in terms of how quiet and relaxed the school environment was for all of the young people.
- The school employed Psychotherapists to support the pupils in school, which was a relatively new initiative that was proving beneficial.
- Reference was made to the Excluded Lives Project's recently produced research paper entitled 'School exclusions risk after Covid-19' which provided a range of case studies of the type of challenges that had been discussed during the visit in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on pupils, particularly those in Year 8 and Year 9.
- Ofsted had noted during a recent inspection that it approved of the steps taken by Kings Academy before any pupils were excluded.
- Kings Academy was part of the Emmanuel Trust and it had schools from Doncaster to Northumberland and pastoral welfare was of the utmost importance and effective attendance systems were in place.
- It was important to look at the root causes of exclusions and social dysfunction was an issue.

**AGREED** that the Board continue to undertake the remaining school visits, as arranged.

20/95

**THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL - FINAL REPORT - SUFFICIENCY AND PERMANENCY**

The recommendations to be submitted to the Executive were:

- a) That the sustained efforts being made to reduce the number of children looked after in Middlesbrough, in line with our regional statistical neighbours, be supported and that the performance scorecard being reported to LMT on a six-weekly basis in relation to this indicator be shared with the Panel on a quarterly basis.
- b) That a specific piece of work be undertaken to establish why a high percentage of children (15.1%) become looked after at birth and that this work includes performance information and exploration of whether further interventions can be put in place to reduce this figure. If appropriate, a set of performance indicators should be identified to monitor improvement over the next year in the first instance.
- c) That analysis be undertaken to identify any potential gaps in child protection provision in the more ethnically diverse wards and further work be undertaken to provide assurance that the statistical under representation/over representation of children of different ethnicities being looked after by the local authority aligns with the level of need amongst these groups.
- d) That work be undertaken to identify how the provision of Early Help can be increased in North Ormesby, (subject to further analysis and if this remains appropriate), and that the recommendations put forward by the Children and Young People's Social Care Scrutiny Panel in its Final Report on 'Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective' regarding further assessment of demand and the number of Early Help workers assigned to the areas, be taken forward.
- e) That the sustained efforts to increase the number of children being placed in an in-house foster placement be continued and that the targets established remain a key priority indicator for the service and performance be regularly reported to the Panel.
- f) The Panel appreciated the challenges faced by the service in relation to the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers and the continuous efforts being made to increase in-house Foster Carer provision. The Panel recommended that additional feedback is sought from Foster Carers leaving Middlesbrough's Fostering Service to ensure that the information gained through the satisfaction surveys is fully utilised to focus on continuing improvement in this area.
- g) The Panel noted that there is currently very little advertising across the town to indicate that Middlesbrough Council needs and wants more people to become in-house foster carers. The Panel recommended that the work to increase the number of in-house foster carers continues with pace and focus on additional advertising and marketing which

should be analysed to improve awareness of the continuous need for more people to become in-house foster carers.

- h) The Panel acknowledged the improvements in the reduction of the use of Connected Carer Placements and Placements with Parents, however, it remains an area for improvement, and it is recommended that performance data is regularly presented to the panel in respect of these elements.

**AGREED** that the findings and recommendations of the Children and Young People's Social Care Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

20/96

## **THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL - FINAL REPORT - LOCALITY WORKING FROM A CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERSPECTIVE**

The recommendations to be submitted to the Executive were:

- a) That the panel supported the continuation of Locality Working in both Newport and North Ormesby and further supported the roll-out of the model to other areas of the town based on priority need, to be determined through demand analysis, community surveys and led by the evaluation report for consideration by the Executive.
- b) In supporting the Locality Working model in Middlesbrough, the Panel recommended that discussions with senior managers and directors of finance within all public sector partner organisations were held with a view to appropriately and proportionately funding each locality working area to ensure sufficient staffing allocations to meet demand. The Panel would further recommend that appropriate core structures are in place within the locality teams to ensure that Neighbourhood Managers are fully supported and deputised for during periods of absence/holidays.
- c) The Panel acknowledged the high numbers of early help cases in both Newport and North Ormesby and noted the views of the Early Help Practitioners that they feel there are not enough practitioners to meet demand. The Panel recommended that, subject to further analysis, consideration be given to the number of Early Help workers allocated to each area.
- d) The Panel noted the impact data in respect of Children's Social Care Services within the localities and that the number of children looked after remained high. The Panel acknowledges that, whilst social workers have been in place for some time in the locality areas, they have only fairly recently been moved into one team to ensure consistency of approach and management oversight. The Panel, therefore, recommends that impact continues to be monitored and reported to the Panel in six months' time.
- e) That Early Help Practitioners and the Social Workers be introduced to appropriate staff within each of the areas' schools to build up relationships and discuss children/families requiring support through regular dialogue and that the work of the locality teams be promoted and regularly discussed with school leadership teams.
- f) That school readiness and children's centre registrations continue to be monitored and promoted in a range of languages to maximise reach and take up of nursery places to ensure that children are ready for school to optimise their learning potential.
- g) That relevant community and voluntary organisations, including schools, be equally involved in the locality teams and that appropriate information sharing takes place to ensure:
  - i) That access to a 'signposting directory' of all services and organisations available to support families within the localities was available to all partners via the Neighbourhood Manager/a designated co-ordinator.
  - ii) That programmes of activities and events designed to support children and families are planned, discussed and co-ordinated in advance between partners within the localities to avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure those who need help and support receive it. (For example, that the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) provision is co-ordinated in conjunction with Feast of Fun activity to maximise appropriate take-up and avoid duplication).

- h) That stronger links are made, through Public Health colleagues if and where appropriate, between primary care and acute care providers including GPs, mental health provision, midwife and health visiting services with improved referral pathways to Early Help and Children's Social Care Services where appropriate.
- i) That all partners were familiar with Middlesbrough's threshold of need document when making referrals to children's social care to improve the quality of referrals and ensure that the correct level of support can be determined and provided as quickly as possible and that the document be readily accessible via the Neighbourhood Manager/designated Co-ordinator.
- j) That Locality Working in Middlesbrough should be better promoted and clearly branded to ensure that all partners, and the community, are aware of how it operates, who is involved and how to make contact. The Wigan Deal is a good example of this where each priority area has an 'our part' (the borough's public sector organisations and partners) and a 'your part' (residents) so that the principles of working together to achieve joint ambitions is realised with each partner aware of what is expected of them.

**AGREED** that the findings and recommendations of the Children and Young People's Social Care Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.