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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL**

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 18 July 2022.

**PRESENT:** Councillors T Higgins, C Hobson, M Nugent and G Wilson

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor M Smiles

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** M Fishpool (Programme Director, You Got This) and A Rodgers (Principal, Unity City Academy)

**OFFICERS:** K Bargewell, R Brown, S Butcher, C Cannon, T Dunn, S Lloyd, A Mace, G Moore and K Smith

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors D McCabe, M Saunders, A Hellaoui and D Jones

**Appointment of Chair Pro Tem**

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, nominations were sought for the appointment of a Chair Pro Tem of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor C Hobson was nominated and seconded and, following a vote, appointed as Chair Pro Tem of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

**AGREED** that Councillor C Hobson be appointed as Chair Pro Tem of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel for the duration of the meeting.

**22/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**22/11 MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 20 JUNE 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 20 June 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

**22/12 SCHOOL MEALS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION - AN OVERVIEW**

The Advanced Public Health Practitioner was in attendance to present:

- an overview of school meals and healthy eating standards in schools;
- information on free school meals and Middlesbrough's headline facts and figures; and
- information on the physical education curriculum and details of school-based activities.

The Advanced Public Health Practitioner advised that the content of the submitted report had been prepared by Public Health, in collaboration with Environment Services (Catering Services) and Children's Services.

Members heard that by the time they started primary school (aged 4/5 years), around one in ten children in Middlesbrough were living with obesity and that figure increased to one in five by the time that they were in Year 6 (10/11 year olds).

It was highlighted that children living in low income families had poorer diets. In Middlesbrough 32.7% of children were living in income deprived families, in comparison with the England average of 17.1%.

The scrutiny panel was advised that those living with obesity suffered from worse physical and mental health outcomes, and they achieved poorer educational results than their normal weight peers. It was heard that, in experiments with primary school pupils, investigators had found that the children voiced negative views about a fictional book character called 'fat Alfie' - they were less likely to invite him to parties or less likely to want to be his friend.

When determining the reasons for obesity, it was advised that a simple energy in and energy out equation was usually referred to. Members were shown an Obesity Foresight Map, which demonstrated a complex web of intertwined factors that influenced a person's energy balance. Those factors included biology, individual psychology, food production, food consumption, societal influences, individual activity and activity environment.

Members heard that the School Food Standards were designed to ensure that all children received the energy and nutrients they needed to get the most from their school day, whilst developing healthy habits in relation to food. The standards were compulsory for all maintained schools, including academies and free schools.

Work was being undertaken to develop an Eat Well Schools Award, which would support schools to adopt a whole setting approach to food and nutrition. The award was due to be launched in September 2022. The programme planned to include training and resources for catering staff to ensure they developed nutritionally balanced menus, which not only met 100% of the School Food Standards but went above and beyond to provide healthy nutritious school meals. The programme also planned to provide all staff with information on the importance of eating well, how to create a positive food environment and how to educate children about food and wellbeing. The aim of the programme was to support schools to create a health promoting culture, throughout the whole setting.

Members heard that Middlesbrough Council Catering Services catered for 30 schools in the borough and in 2021/22, the service had served a total of 1,498,807 meals within those schools. The service was currently working to rebrand and revitalise school meals to encourage children to make healthier choices. A new menu that exceeded School Food Standards was being created and would go live in April 2023.

Starting in the new academic year, Public Health South Tees was introducing three new physical activity programmes into schools in Middlesbrough:

- The Creating Active Schools Framework (CAS), which planned to build physical activity into the school day and embed a culture of physical activity within schools, would be delivered by You've Got This (one of twelve Sport England funded Local Delivery Pilots nationally). It was planned that CAS would be trialled in South Tees with around four schools starting the main body of the work in Autumn 2022. If successful, it was planned that phase two would be rolled out in September 2023. The CAS Framework was attached at Appendix 1 of the submitted report.
- Over the past eight years, colleagues in Redcar & Cleveland had been developing a schools pedometer programme. Pedometers were used to enable children to collect their levels of physical activity in the form of steps. Starting from September 2022, the pedometer programme would be offered to all of Middlesbrough's primary schools. Initially, it was planned that there would be 100 pedometers available for loan, with the option to supply more if demand was higher. Members heard that data would be collected over a period of time and then used in a variety of lessons to teach not only about physical activity and healthy lifestyles but also mathematics (e.g. to draw bar charts) and geography (e.g. a virtual walk to famous places). A research study, evaluating the impact of the programme, had showed that not only did it increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour, but that the impact was the greatest in those who were least active at the start.
- It was planned that School Air Quality Action Zones programme would be trialled in two Middlesbrough primary schools, and two Redcar & Cleveland primary schools, from September 2022 onwards. Similar to the pedometer programme, data would be collected (in that instance, air quality data), which would then be used in school to change behaviour.

Members were advised that the Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme delivered provision for all school-aged children and young people in receipt of free school meal (FSM)

related-benefits and provided:

- healthy meals that met School Food Standards;
- physical activity, nutrition education and wider enrichment; and
- signposting and referrals to services and support.

The scrutiny panel heard that HAF provision could be accessed for four weeks during the summer break, for a week at Easter and a week at Christmas. Through the grants programme, 1,000s of HAF places had been commissioned.

It was advised that a game of Beat the Street had taken place in Middlesbrough during September 2021. Using game cards, adults and children tapped card readers placed on street furniture around the town to receive points for physically active journeys. A total of 14,528 local residents (10.3% of the local population) had joined in. A list of the winning schools was included at Appendix 2 of the submitted report. It was advised that a large proportion of the adults and children who were inactive (or less active) at the beginning of the game, had become physically active following the six week game. Members heard that behaviour change was greatest in the least affluent areas, contributing to efforts to reduce inequalities.

In conclusion, there was a number of programmes that would be offered to schools starting from September 2022 to improve the diets and physical activity levels of Middlesbrough's children and their families. However, it was highlighted that schools alone could not tackle obesity. A whole systems approach to physical activity and diet was required, by changing not only individual behaviour but also policy and the physical environment.

The Principal of Unity City Academy was in attendance to provide the scrutiny panel with information on the academy's physical education curriculum.

The Principal advised that Unity City Academy was located close to the most deprived wards in Middlesbrough, meaning that the life expectancy of males and females was approximately 12 years less than the life expectancy of those living in more affluent areas of Middlesbrough. The area also had high rates of alcohol-related hospital admissions, high rates of teenage pregnancy and smoking during pregnancy and low rates of breastfeeding initiation. The academy worked actively to break that cycle.

Members heard that the academy had rebranded its PE department and it was now a health and wellbeing facility, which incorporated physical activity, health and social care, dance, drama and performing arts. It was advised that for the first three years of secondary education, pupils were entitled to receive two hours of physical education per week. The academy offered a wide range of activities and pupils had use of a gym and trampoline. After school clubs could also be accessed by pupils to undertake sports and activities outside of the two hour entitlement.

The academy differed from other secondary schools as, when pupils reached Key Stage 4, pupils were encouraged to increase their physical education entitlement to five hours per week. Currently, 99% of pupils had increased their offer to five hours, which enabled them to study a qualification in health and wellbeing. The qualification enabled pupils to learn about topics such as metabolism, healthy eating and the impact of exercise and risk taking behaviours.

The academy trained its pupils to become school leaders in sports, delivering sports and activities to primary-aged pupils, such as tag rugby, football, cross country etc.

The Principal was the Chairman of the Tees Valley School Sports Association, which co-ordinated sports and games across the Tees Valley.

The academy had a combined cadet force, involving approximately 60 pupils. In addition, the academy provided funding for all Year 9 pupils to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. During a recent inspection, Ofsted had acknowledged that the range of extra-curricular activities, and the qualification offered to pupils in health and wellbeing, aimed to address inequalities in the area and develop the leadership skills of pupils.

A Member expressed concern in respect of the levels of deprivation in the town. It was commented that in order to break intergenerational poverty, intervention from the Government

was required and parents needed to be educated on how to cook nutritious meals.

A Member raised a query about the delivery of sports to primary schools. In response, the Principal advised that activities and sports were delivered to primary-aged pupils throughout the academic year.

In response to a Member's query regarding the number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) at the academy, the Principal explained that 79% of pupils were eligible for Pupil Premium and approximately 48% were eligible for FSM.

A Member commented on the need for work to be undertaken to encourage parents to walk to school with their children. The Programme Director for You've Got This advised that, to address obesity, action was required and a systems approach was needed. Work was not only required with individuals but families and communities too. In addition, the physical environment needed to be conducive to assist cultural change, for example, if pupils were going to walk or cycle to school, improvements to road safety and installation of cycle stores may be required. In essence, policies were required that planned to address the complex web of intertwined factors, enable a whole system approach and manage a sustained cultural change.

A Member expressed concern in respect of the number of hot food takeaways in the borough. In response, the Advanced Public Health Practitioner advised that a Hot Food Takeaway Policy had been adopted in 2019. It was commented that, since the adoption of the policy, the number of hot food takeaways receiving approval had been minimal. However, the policy did not restrict the number of restaurants or dark kitchens (delivery only industrial units).

The Director of Education and Partnerships advised that the Pupil Premium was funding, provided by the Government, to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in schools in England. It was commented that approximately 40% of pupils in Middlesbrough, across the primary and secondary sector, were eligible for FSM. It was explained that although the high numbers of those accessing FSM indicated the high levels of deprivation in the town, it was also a protective factor as it ensured those children were receiving high-quality, nutritious meals. It was added that obesity was a complex societal issue that schools were unable to solve alone.

The scrutiny panel was asked how it wished to proceed with the review. Members were in agreement that the topic required further investigation, as the health of children in Middlesbrough was of significant concern. The Executive Director for Children's Services explained that the information received by the scrutiny panel provided an overview of school meals and physical activity in schools. However, it was commented that the Council's Catering Service was delivered by Environment Services and promoting physical activity and addressing obesity were primarily the responsibility of Public Health. It was therefore commented that further investigation of the topic would primarily fall within the remit of the Health Scrutiny Panel. It was agreed that, in respect of the 2022/23 work programme for Health Scrutiny Panel, the Democratic Services Officer would submit a request that the topic of 'childhood obesity' be considered as a topic for inclusion.

Members were in agreement that, in a year's time, a further update on the topic of school meals and physical education would be requested in respect of:

- the programmes that were planned for implementation in September 2022 to improve the diets and physical activity levels of children; and
- the new menu, planned to exceed School Food Standards, which would be launched in April 2023.

## **AGREED**

1. That an update on the topic of school meals and physical education be submitted to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel in a year's time.

## **EDUCATION AND COVID-19 RECOVERY**

The Executive Director of Children's Services explained that, although there were rising rates of Covid-19, those rates were not impacting on the day-to-day functioning of schools. All

schools were now undertaking 'business as usual' activities.

**NOTED**

22/14

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE**

In the absence of the Chair, the item was deferred.