

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**  
**held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 1 November 2018**

Present:

Members: Councillor M Mutton (Chair)  
Councillor L Bigham  
Councillor J Clifford (substitute for Councillor C Thomas)  
Councillor L Kelly  
Councillor J Lepoidevin  
Councillor A Lucas  
Councillor P Male  
Councillor K Sandhu (substitute for Councillor D Kershaw)

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson and Mrs K Jones

Cabinet Members: Councillor K Maton – Cabinet Member for Education  
Councillor P Seaman – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Employees (by Directorate):

People J Gregg, K Nelson  
Place G Holmes, R Moon, M Rose

Apologies: Councillor B Kaur  
Councillor D Kershaw  
Councillor C Thomas  
Councillor T Skipper – Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

## **Public Business**

### **31. Declarations of Interests**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

### **32. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 were agreed as a true record.

### **33. Progress on Children's Services Improvement Plan**

Further to minute 12/18 the Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided a progress report on the Children's Services Improvement Plan and succession planning in preparation for the cessation of the Improvement Board. The information had been reported to Children Services Improvement Board on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2018 and their next meeting would be held on 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 to sign off the full Children's Services Improvement Plan.

The Department for Education (DfE) removed Children's Services from intervention on 13 June, 2017, the service was no longer subject to an improvement notice. Supervision and support had been provided by the DfE over the last 12 months, which included two reviews held in January 2018 and June 2018 and this had now ended. A further Ofsted focused inspection or Joint Targeted Area Inspection could occur at any time and a full standard inspection was anticipated in the future.

To oversee the improvement journey and as a response to the inadequate rating a Children's Service Improvement Board was established and was chaired by an experienced improvement consultant and retired Her Majesty Inspector (HMI). The Board included elected Members and representatives and from the Council, partner agencies and the Department for Education. Progress was reported to the Improvement Board every twelve weeks.

The briefing note recognised that recruiting and retaining experienced social workers was a challenge across children and families social work, and particularly in area based teams. This was a national and regional issue. To increase the number of experienced social workers, Children's Services held an Open evening on 2 October 2018, offering experienced social workers an opportunity to apply for vacancies and be interviewed on the same day. The evening was actively promoted through Facebook/LinkedIn/Guardian/radio and the job shop. The event successfully resulted in seven offers of appointment and a further event was being planned in January 2019.

Through the continued work on the Social Work Academy model, it was an aspiration to be a leading regional employer of choice for social workers. As a member of the West Midlands Teaching Partnership, Coventry offered a number of opportunities and benefits to social workers which included, a Step Up to Social Work Graduate Pathway; a Frontline Programme and an Aspirant Social Work Programme Pre-Qualifying Pathway.

The briefing note also highlighted the progression scheme, exit interviews and the seven Practice Standards.

The report detailed progress regarding:

- improving Looked After Children school attendance
- police guidance on Child Sexual Exploitation and the dedicated gang team
- new early help assessment
- signs of safety training
- the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Looked After Children Service (LAC) launched in April 2018

The report also provided an update on performance:

- Increasing Looked After Children numbers
- Contact timeliness
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) timeliness
- Re-referrals
- Recording issues
- Assessments

The Board questioned the Cabinet Member and officers on the following:

- Workforce recruiting
- Continual recruitment required due to the low average career timespan for social workers
- Retention initiatives
- Staff morale with an inspection due
- Homelessness and children presenting as homeless
- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- What an Ofsted 'good' would look like with statistics
- Diversity of the workforce
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Gangs
- The Executive Group replacing the Improvement Board

The officer's present provided detail regarding the current number of employees and agency workers and vacancies. It was reported that Ofsted visits were approached as 'business as usual' and the aim was to do our best for the Children of Coventry.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **The Scrutiny Board agree the recommendations and welcome the consideration of the full report of the Improvement Board in February, 2019.**
- 2) **The Scrutiny Board request a briefing to update the Board on the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Looked After Child (LAC) service which was reporting to the Improvement Board in January, 2019.**

34. **One Strategic Plan Consultation**

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided information to enable members to comment and respond to the consultation on the Education and Learning One Strategic Plan 2018-2022, including SEND (Special Educational Need and Disability) Phase One (Woodlands site). There were 2 Cabinet Reports appended to the briefing note one which detailed proposals for Secondary school places, Coventry One Strategic Plan and Education Capital Programme (Cabinet Minute 46/18 refers). The other Cabinet report was regarding proposals for the first stage of changes to SEND provision, One Strategic Plan - SEND proposal for the use of the Woodlands site (Cabinet Minute 64/18 refers).

The Cabinet noted that Under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996, Coventry City Council had a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places and fair, appropriate access to education. It was the Council's role to plan, commission and organise school places in a way that raised standards, managed supply and demand and created a diverse infrastructure.

The Coventry One Strategic Plan, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, set out pupil forecasts for primary and secondary education planning areas in response to

rising or falling pupil cohorts across the city. It outlined the strategy proposed by the Local Authority and the Coventry Secondary Headteacher Partnership to meet the additional places required in secondary provision from 2019 – 2021.

It was proposed that the strategy would be a flexible document, able to adapt to shifting mechanisms of parental preference, unforeseen changes in supply and demand of school places, and future birth rates. To do this, the One Strategic Plan would be monitored and updated annually, alongside a wider process of constant review of School Place Planning. In addition, the procuring of places would take place annually so as to not create an unstable amount of school places.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had been established to ensure partnership commitment between the Council and secondary schools (and would be rolled out to primary and special, subject to approval). These partnerships signify a commitment and cooperation between the Council, governing bodies and school leadership teams to meet the educational needs of children and young people in Coventry, ensure the sustainability of Coventry schools, and to enable the City Council to meet its statutory obligations.

This partnership commitment signified a statement of intent to collaborate and work in partnership to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people in Coventry, ensure the sustainability of Coventry schools, and to enable the City Council to meet its statutory obligations. As part of this process, numerous options had been discussed at both full partnership meetings, and the Secondary Headteacher Executive.

The Cabinet had also given approval in Principle to co-locate Woodfield Primary and Secondary Schools to the site previously occupied by Woodlands School, Broad Lane, Coventry. The One Strategic Plan also outlined the strategy to meet the growing demand for places for children with special educational needs and disabilities including provision for children age 5 to 16, with complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This specialist provision was currently delivered by Woodfield Special School from two separate sites. It was acknowledged that the existing school buildings were deemed unsuitable for purpose in the long term and had insufficient capacity to meet the growing demand.

An opportunity had arisen to re-use the site which contained listed buildings, previously occupied by Woodlands School, to co-locate Woodfield School, in its entirety. This would provide a future proofed fit for purpose educational environment, offering a full range of facilities including sport to learners, with the capacity for the provision to grow. The potential utilisation of the 'Woodlands site' enabled the physical separation of phases specifically primary and secondary to ensure that pupils from either phase were able to benefit from age appropriate curriculum and resources. The site security and design would ensure that pupils would only be able to access their own internal and external learning environment.

The report set out how the relocation could be facilitated and sought an "in principle" approval to proceed with a detailed feasibility study, consultation and, if appropriate, present final proposals for Council consideration and decision.

The Board questioned the Cabinet Member and officers on the following:

- The reduction in the surplus capacity and the impact on parental preference
- The projection calculations based on housing numbers
- The impact on and views of all parents and young people affected by planned permanent expansions and in particular the effects on vulnerable groups
- The delivery of recommendations by schools
- Timescales for the proposals regarding Woodlands School
- The number of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools
- The 240 additional places available in year 7 for 2019-2020
- Managing risks
- The impact of Brexit
- The process for de-listing buildings

The Cabinet Member (Education) reassured the Board regarding the partnership in Coventry between schools, the single plan was a testament to their commitment to work collectively and that they were accountable to each other. The Council were responsible for delivering something which it had limited control over. Officers recognised that the trust boards and governors were also involved in the memorandum of understanding between schools and there was an investment into expansions.

Officers recognised that the reduced capacity would be below the recommended average however, the geography of the City and the ability to travel around Coventry would be an advantage.

**RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board agree the recommendations and request that the consultation include the views of parents and students at SEND schools and the schools that are planning to permanently increase numbers.**

35. **Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Board noted that the meeting in January, 2019 would be moved to 14th February, 2019 to enable a discussion about the Improvement Board as discussed in minute 33 above.

The meeting on 29th November, 2018 would be held in a library and the meeting on 14th February would be held in an Early Help Hub.

**RESOLVED that the changes requested be arranged.**

36. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 3.15 pm)