

# CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## Monday, 17 June 2024

**PRESENT** – Councillors, Ahmed, Imtiaz (Chair), Jackson, McCaughran, Raja and Russell.

**OFFICERS** – Jo Siddle, Michelle Holt, Liz Clarkson and Phil Llewellyn.

**ALSO PRESENT** – Julie Gunn, Executive Member for Children & Young People & Education, Ethan Woods, Deputy Youth MP, Lily Krause, Youth Forum Member.

### RESOLUTIONS

#### 1 **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

Apologies had been received from Councillors Salma Patel, Matt Gibson and Julie Slater.

#### 2 **Minutes of the last meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

#### 3 **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were received.

#### 4 **Work Programme 2024/25**

The Committee received a presentation from Jo Siddle, Michelle Holt and Cllr Julie Gunn on the priorities and objectives for 2024/25 for the Children, Young People & Education Portfolio, the aim of which was to assist the Committee in agreeing its Work Programme for 2024/25.

The main Departmental priorities were summarised as:

- We are systemic
- Transitions for all ages and need
- Best start in life
- Right support, right time
- Stable Homes built on love
- Reaching full potential

A key upcoming focus was the SEND Local Area Inspection, which was imminent, and the three inspection outcomes were outlined. Additionally, the ILACS Inspection was due from January 2025 onwards, which was another key focus, and the results classifications were also outlined.

The Current priorities for the Department were:

- Embed our refreshed Corporate Parenting Partnership arrangements
- Preparation for inspection – SEND and ILACS
- Consolidate good practice across all areas, including assessments, visits and supervision/management oversight
- Embedding the new Working Together guidelines
- Delivering the Family Help Strategy
- Fostering Recruitment Hub
- Strengthen Children's Services Commissioning arrangements
- Continue drive around workforce recruitment and retention
- Strengthen transitions into adulthood
- Deliver on the 6 key education priorities in the School Effectiveness Partnership Strategy.
- Deliver on the 7 key outcomes outlined in the SEND Partnership Strategy ensuring strong education, employment and training opportunities for children and young people with SEND.

Members of the Committee focussed on a number of areas, including the likely outcomes of the two main inspections, and the need to understand areas of focus and how Members could scrutinise these. Jo Siddle agreed to circulate the link to the Ofsted Handbook and the Council's Self Evaluation to aid the Committee in its work. The LGA also had some useful scrutiny resources for Members.

Recruitment and retention of Social Workers was a key focus and caseloads of Children's Social Workers were discussed, as was the support available to them. Targets to increase the number of Foster Carers in the Borough were also discussed, and it was noted that the situation was improving, but targets were not yet being hit. Care packages when using independent agencies were costly, and it was hoped that the next Government would follow through on the recommendations of the McCallister review. Wherever possible, children were placed within the Borough. Members also discussed Children's Homes and placements from outside the Borough.

Members were advised of the value of the Peer Review arrangements in place, which were not mandatory, but which assisted the Council in improving its services.

In terms of Commissioning, work was in progress towards a strategy, and the North-West Framework was utilised. Other strategies being refreshed or focussed on included the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and development of a Housing Strategy for Care Leavers.

In terms of Budget Pressures, costs of foster care placements were high, as outlined, but also more complex cases were particularly costly, and it was also predicted that Home to School Transport costs, which were already rising, would double over the coming years, which was a national issue.

Cllr Julie Gunn, Jo Siddle and Michelle Holt were thanked for their contributions and then left the meeting.

The Committee discussed potential areas to scrutinise, one main topic per meeting, and the order they would be scrutinised in. It was also noted that officers would be asked to ensure that reports/presentations be made available in good time ahead of meetings, ideally at the same time as agenda dispatch.

**RESOLVED –**

That the Work Programme for 2024/25 be agreed as follows:

1. Preparation for the SEND/ILACS Inspections (19<sup>th</sup> August 2024).
2. Strengthen Children’s Services Commissioning arrangements including development of Commissioning Strategy (4<sup>th</sup> November 2024)
3. Transitions, including development and progress of Housing Strategy for Care Leavers (17<sup>th</sup> February 2025).

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
at which the minutes were confirmed