

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Thursday, 12 September 2024

PRESENT – Councillor Riley (Chair), Councillors Floyd, Gunn, Hussain M, Mahmood, McGurk, Smith J and Talbot.

ALSO PRESENT: Zainab Shah - Youth MP, Ethan Woods and Nadeem Iqbal - Deputy Youth MP's.

RESOLUTIONS

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Phil Riley, welcomed all present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from the Councillor Desai, Officer Denise Park.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th August agreed as a correct record.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hussain declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in minute number 8.1 as he was a teacher within the Adults Social Care service.

4 Equality Implications

The Chair asked Members to confirm that they had considered and understood and Equality Impact Assessments associated with reports on the agenda ahead of making any decisions.

5 Public Forum

No questions had been submitted by members of the public.

6 Questions by Non-Executive Members

No questions had been submitted by Non-Executive Members.

7 Youth MPs Update

The Youth MP, Zainab Shah, verbally updated the Executive Board on recent events and activities:

- Zainab attended the Biteback Summer residential which was an amazing experience and opportunity to meet other members of the Biteback family. This included attending workshops which highlighted the power of junk food giants and the impact they had on young people; campfire; laser quest and night walks.
- Nadeem participated in a YPS residential at Water Park, Coniston along

with young people from the voice forums, youth forums and Kids Next Door ASD youth group. Activities helped build confidence and trying new things to overcome fears, such as heights.

- Ethan also enjoyed the YPS residential and was busy planning the next residential at Coldwell Inn at the end of September. This would be attended by young people from across many youth organisations in Blackburn with Darwen. At the residential the attendees would have the opportunity to develop a storyboard for their upcoming short video on the negative effects of gambling. It was hoped this would be completed by October.

8 Executive Member Reports

LEADER

The Leader verbally reflected on national events following the tragedy in Southport, thanked the Police and Council Officers for their support locally, and commented on the need for people to find the balance between being vigilant and over-reacting, noting that the speed of misinformation was a real issue.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH

8.1 Commissioning and Contracting update for People Services

The Executive Board was asked to note the progress to review and redesign of the commissioning function across People Services and plans in relation to contracts which are interdependent with this review. The Council was progressing with a restructure of the commissioning team, and this work was now at implementation phase. Over the coming months recruitment to expand the capacity and capability within the commissioning team would be completed.

Commissioning was a statutory function of the council and included planning and purchasing the health and care services that were needed by the people who live in the area that it covers. It was a cyclical activity which involved the process of assessing needs, designing and planning, purchasing, maintaining and monitoring services. Effective commissioning ensured that services provided positive outcomes for residents, were value for money for the public pound and were sustainable for providers. Commissioning was both strategic and operational. Strategic commissioning (otherwise called macro commissioning) would involve long term planning, understanding future needs and designing services to ensure that commissioning plans were aligned with the system vision and strategies and were implemented in a sustainable and cost-effective manner.

Operational commissioning (otherwise called micro commissioning) was the day-to-day management and delivery of services and included the process of matching an individual's needs with local services. This operational process was person-centred and ensured that service user specific care and support needs were met by commissioned services.

Across the People Services portfolio (Adults & Health, Public Health,

Children's & Education), there were circa 250 core contracts and circa 250 individual spot-purchase contracts. The annual gross-spend on commissioning across People Services in 2024/25 was expected to be more than £100million.

The Council was progressing a restructure of the commissioning team for People Services, and this work was now at implementation phase. The first phase of this work had involved a full review and redesign of the commissioning function of the council, a business case to expand its capacity, consultation with affected staff and an internal implementation process. The next phase of implementation would include recruitment to unfilled positions, and this would commence in September 2024. The new structure was aligned with the life-course approach of start-well, live-well and age-well and included both strategic and operational commissioning functions. When fully implemented there would be 28WTE staff within the team. The redesign and implementation of the commissioning function provided an exciting opportunity to ensure that commissioned services maximise outcomes for residents across the borough

RESOLVED –

1. That it be noted that the review and redesign of the commissioning function across People Services was progressing, and the implementation of this new structure was underway. When implemented, this new structure would provide a significant increase in the capacity and capability of the strategic and operational commissioning functions.
2. That it be noted that whilst the review of the commissioning function was completed, measures were being implemented and a work programme developed to ensure continuity of service/support provision through contracts for commissioned services being progressed.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION

8.2 SEND Partnership Strategy

A report was submitted with an appendix to outline Blackburn with Darwen's refreshed and updated Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy for 2024-2027.

Appendix 1 was a strategy that set out the SEND Partnership's vision, principles, and priorities for the next 3 years, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

The Strategy built on Blackburn with Darwen's previously co-produced 2018 SEND Strategy which was reviewed after a SEND Partners Stocktake Event in 2019 and updated again following an Outcomes Based Accountability Masterclass in 2020.

Following the pandemic, the SEND Strategic Partnership Board agreed it was the right time to commence a full SEND Strategy review, given the national and local rise in numbers of children and young people presenting

with SEND alongside Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The Board commissioned the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) to support this review exercise and following a programme of stakeholder engagement 4 priority areas for improvement were agreed: -

- Preparation for Adulthood (especially transition from children to adult services).
- Aligning commissioning priorities to ensure they reflect and meet local needs.
- Ensuring sufficiency of SEND educational specialist places to meet needs.
- Securing strong multi-agency working to accurately identify and meet children and young people's needs without delay.

The review also resulted in the development of a refreshed SEND Strategy for 2024-2027. This strategy had been fully co-produced with children, young people with SEND and their families, alongside professionals across education, health and social care. The SEND Strategy was also aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan, showing that they are: -

'Ambitious for all our children and young people and determined to ensure that no one is left behind'.

Furthermore, the Strategy had been produced with regards to national policy context, including the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice (2015), the Department for Education's Special Educational Needs 'Green Paper' (2022), and the Government's SEND and alternative provision improvement plan (2023), ensuring our children and young people access *'the right support, at the right time, in the right place'*.

The SEND Strategic Partnership Board was accountable for delivery against the SEND Strategy. Board representation consisted of senior leaders from Social Care, Health, and Education and Blackburn with Darwen's Parent/Carer Forum.

RESOLVED -

1. That the revised SEND Strategy be approved and, in doing so, the principles and desired outcomes of the revised Strategy be supported and acknowledged.
2. That the council continues to champion the work of the SEND partnership, noting its journey so far and how the partnership would continue to drive forward improvements for children and young people with SEND in Blackburn with Darwen.
3. That the need to undertake a medium-term financial assessment of the impact of the continuing pressures on SEND provision on the High Needs DSG budget and the Council's General Fund be noted.

8.3 Mockingbird Family Model

The Executive Board received a report providing information on the Mockingbird Model for fostering that delivered sustainable foster care. Mockingbird was an evidence-based model that supported fostering households to nurture the relationships between children, young people and

foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community, similarly to that of an extended family. The Mockingbird Model significantly aids in placement stability, foster carer retention, placement sufficiency and foster care recruitment. The report provided information on the implementation of the Mockingbird Model in Blackburn with Darwen and how the model would be sustained following the end of the Department for Education (DfE) funding in March 2025.

Foster carer recruitment and retention had become a significant challenge across the UK with local authorities competing with independent fostering agencies (IFA) to recruit carers. The number of people wishing to become foster carers had significantly reduced. This, with the competitive nature of fostering recruitment, had led to a decline in the number of foster carers approved in local authorities across the UK.

The Mockingbird Model was already being used as a recruitment tool in all BWD recruitment activity as well as in the Northwest Foster with Us Recruitment Hub, recruitment activity. The Mockingbird Model was highlighted in all social media posts aimed at demonstrating the support provided through the model to potential applicants who were seeking to be foster carers. The most recent social media recruitment post highlighting the implementation of Mockingbird at BWD, showed a dramatic increase in interest compared to other social media posts, demonstrating how Mockingbird could be a powerful and valuable tool for foster carer recruitment. BWD had recruited five fostering households with five currently in assessment, with a projection of approving 10 fostering households by November 2024. The aim was to recruit twelve fostering households by March 2025.

The local authorities in the northwest cluster were implementing the Mockingbird Model with the aim of launching their first constellation by November 2024. BWD were the lead local authority in implementing the Mockingbird Model across the cluster of local authorities. Work had begun to implement the first Mockingbird Constellation. The Hub Carer had been identified, the Hub carer would receive a fostering allowance equivalent to 2 x Band 3, 16 plus. The Hub Carer had one available placement at this cost, which was included in the foster carer payments budget, therefore the additional cost would be 1 x Band 3, 16 plus weekly allowance. This was included in the DfE funding until March 2025.

The Liaison Worker role had been recruited to and had been seconded from the Kinship Care Service. This was included in the funding from the DfE until March 2025.

RESOLVED -

That the Executive Board:

1. That the establishment of a single constellation of the Mockingbird Model be agreed with effect from October 2024.
2. That a budget provision of £80k in the financial year of 2025/26 be agreed and funded by way of a contribution from the Invest to Save Reserve.

3. That, subject to the success of the first constellation, the continuing costs of the Mockingbird Model be funded by way of a virement from the Placements Budget (so that the overall costs were neutral for the Council).
4. That delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Director Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Executive Members for Children, Young People and Education to implement up to 4 additional constellations subject to the costs being met from consequent savings in the Placements Budget.
5. That a further report on the operation of the Mockingbird Model be submitted to the Executive Board in 18 months' time.

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024 - 2027

Appendix 1 Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024 - 2027

The Executive Board received the Blackburn with Darwen (BwD) Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024 – 2027 that aligned with the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027. BwD values 'Proud to be BwD' and the Priorities for Children's Services and Education: Stable Homes built on love, right support, right time, right person, effective transitions for all ages and needs, raising aspirations and fulfilling potential, systemic practice and the best start in life. This was underpinned by a trauma informed approach, a skilled and stable workforce and the right culture and values.

Through collaboration and coproduction, children in care and care leavers had produced the strategy which was now re-branded. They had developed their top five priorities that mattered to them, and they wanted to see the impact of their contribution on this strategy, whilst understanding the commitment of corporate parents and holding them to account.

Priority 1 – IDENTITY

Priority 2 – HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Priority 3 – STABLE HOMES

Priority 4 – LEARNING

Priority 5 – INDEPENDENCE.

Children in Our Care and Care Leavers had said why each priority was important to them and what they wanted to see being delivered by 2027. Corporate parents had then committed to what they would do by this date and agreed to be held accountable at the Corporate Parenting Partnership and by being reinterviewed. Corporate Parents had also agreed wherever possible to be corporate grandparents to care leavers and their children setting out five roles which would be offered. An Action Plan had been developed that would regularly be reviewed with our children in care, care leavers and corporate parents to illustrate impact.

At this time, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwDBC) was the corporate parent to 334 children and 344 Care Leavers (as at 30.06.2024). As a corporate parent, the Council had a collective responsibility to be a good parent to children and young people in its care and was expected to do what any responsible parent would do for their children.

BwDBC had a strong corporate parenting ethos which recognised that the care provided for children was not just about keeping them safe. It recognised the importance of stability for children and the Permanence Policy set out the commitment to children in the care of the Council and the ambition to secure emotional attachment, physical stability and long-term commitment to children. It also aimed to ensure that all children in care received access to appropriate, high quality and stable education, thus affording them with positive educational experiences.

RESOLVED -

That the new Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2024 – 2027 be agreed.

ENVIRONMENT & OPERATIONS

HOUSING & PUBLIC HEALTH

8.5 WorkWell Vanguard

The Executive Board received a report on the WorkWell Vanguard pilot programme following a successful grant application.

WorkWell was a joint Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) and Department for Health & Social Care (DHSC) pilot that sought to provide holistic support to overcome health-related barriers to employment, and a single, joined up pathway to wider support services.

The focus was on early intervention, supporting those at risk of falling out of employment and those who had recently fallen out of work due to health issues, within the first 12 weeks of unemployment. It provided an opportunity for local systems to support everybody, including disabled people and people with health conditions, to start, stay, succeed in work and also to return to employment.

WorkWell would support the development of integrated health and work services, which would provide person-centred health and work support based on a biopsychosocial model. Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and local authorities (LAs) would play a central role in convening local partnerships to design and deliver the WorkWell Partnership Programme.

The WorkWell vanguard bid was based on supporting circa 1000 Blackburn with Darwen residents over the course of the programme, commencing in October 2024 through to March 2026.

RESOLVED –

1. The successful outcome of the Vanguard application be noted and the acceptance of the funding allocation to Blackburn with Darwen up to the maximum potential of £807,000 be accepted as detailed in the finance section.
2. That subject to acceptance of grant and confirmation of the grant agreement, a supplementary revenue estimate of £240,000 in 2024/25 and £5667,000 in 2025/26 be agreed (noting that a proportion of the grant funding was payment by results) being the

- necessary budget provision to deliver the work set out in the report.
3. That a further report on this matter be submitted to the Executive Board in 12 months' time detailing progress and, where it was possible to do so, outline how this work might be sustained post March 2026.

DIGITAL & CUSTOMER SERVICES – NO REPORTS

GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT – NO REPORTS

FINANCE & GOVERNANCE – NO REPORTS

9 Corporate Issues

None.

10 Matters referred to the Executive Board

No matters had been referred to the Executive Board.

Signed at a meeting of the Executive Board
on Thursday 10th October 2024
(being the ensuing meeting on the Executive Board) by

CHAIR