

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Full Meeting
DATE:	Tuesday, 7 January 2020
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Bowler, Carr, T. Cave, Clarke, Felton, Fielding, Gollick, Green, Daniel Griffin, Hand-Davis, Hayward, Higginbottom, Hunt, W. Johnson, Leech, Lodge, Lofts, Makinson, McCarthy, Mitchell, Newing, Noble, Richardson, Smith, Stowe, Sumner, Tattersall and Williams together with co-opted members and Ms. G Carter

12 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies for absence were received in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

13 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Ms Gemma Carter declared a non-pecuniary interest in connection with Minute No. 15 due to her being a Director of an alternative education provider.

Councillor Lodge declared a non-pecuniary interest in connection with Minute Nos. 15 and 18 due to his membership of the Schools Forum and his work with care leavers.

Councillor Newing declared a non-pecuniary interest in connection with Minute Nos. 15 and 18 as she is employed by the NHS.

14 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings be approved as a true and correct record:

- (i) Full Committee, held on 10th September, 2019
- (ii) Thriving and Vibrant Economy, held on 1st October 2019
- (iii) People Achieving Their Potential, held on 5th November
- (iv) Strong & Resilient Communities, held on 3rd December 2019

15 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge - Outcome and Actions

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

- Sarah Norman, Chief Executive of Barnsley Council
- Julia Burrows, Director of Public Health
- Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director - People
- Andrew Frosdick, Executive Director - Core Services

- Matt Gladstone, Executive Director - Place
- Wendy Lowder, Executive Director - Communities
- Neil Copley, Service Director - Finance
- Michael Potter, Service Director - Business Improvement, HR & Communications
- Cllr Stephen Houghton, Leader of Barnsley Council
- Cllr Robin Franklin, Cabinet Support Member - Core Services

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were provided with a report outlining the key findings arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) together with an update on the progress of the Action Plan developed in response to the recommendations of the final report received in April 2019.

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to detailed questioning and challenge, the following issues were highlighted:

The Peer Review had highlighted concerns that the retirement of the previous Chief Executive had heightened anxiety for some staff who were concerned that the direction and ethos of the Council would change and that the upcoming retirement of two more longstanding Executive Officers would cause further concern. Members were reassured that Mel John-Ross had been appointed to the post of Executive Director (Children's Services) from May 2020. Although this is still a significant change, Mel John-Ross is already well known to staff and this will provide continuity. The Executive Director (Core) will be an external appointment but the postholder will undergo a 'back to the floor' induction similar to that followed by the new Chief Executive. Recruitment to both Executive Officer posts involved front line staff to ensure that the successful candidates are well received.

There is some disparity of services across Area Councils, which is to be expected as an inevitable consequence of local democracy and the uniqueness and differing priorities of individual areas. On some issues it makes sense for Area Councils to work together – for example on advice services where a more 'joined-up' approach might be beneficial. What is essential is that Area Councils continue to explore innovative solutions to tricky problems and share good practice with each other, as a great idea which has been successful is generally replicated. Members were reminded that core services are Borough wide and haven't been separated out as this has caused problems in other areas.

Members expressed concern that the reduction in workforce may have an adverse impact on staff health and wellbeing and in particular their mental health. The Council has an in-house Occupational Health Unit and counselling service but recognises the need to continue to do more to promote the wellbeing of staff, which is included in the Investors in People process. A staff workplace health assessment was sent out to all staff which provided rich data and which will be used to develop targeted support for staff around mental health and emotional wellbeing. The Trade Unions are also involved with this.

A Customer Services Charter is being developed to ensure consistency of approach and clarity in terms of access to services, building on the Digital First agenda. It was acknowledged however that there may be some customers who are unable to access services via electronic/digital means.

In terms of risk management, the Council faces a number of risks, such as financial uncertainty around future government funding arrangements; the impact of BREXIT; the Council's reputation and decision making; management of significant events that impact on the community; demographic changes associated with an ageing population; climate change and data protection/ information security. Members were reassured that the Council closely monitors these and other risks which filter down the organisation and has robust processes and systems in place to respond to them. The Risk Management Framework is lean and coherent and is shared with the Audit Committee as part of the Annual Governance Statement.

Financial uncertainty can never be removed, but robust, sensible and affordable plans are in place to address any eventuality. This is the case with all Local Authorities across the country. The Government's focus on using business rates to fund services is a particular concern for Barnsley. It would be a struggle to fund services from Council Tax and Business Rates alone; therefore lobbying is taking place to counteract this.

It was reiterated that the peer review was a very positive report, identifying Barnsley as a 'high performing' Council. Considerable progress has already been made on the action plan, which is deliverable, affordable and the benefits of which outweigh the costs. There are many aspects within the peer review report to be proud of but first and foremost it is about delivering against the ambition to make life better for people of Barnsley and improving their quality of life, which includes social care and educational achievement to name but a few.

There is now a need to work with partners to take stock of Barnsley's priorities for the next decade and develop a strong place-based vision to inform what work the Council needs to do next to deliver the Barnsley 2030 vision. The 2030 consultation will identify needs and aspirations of local people and the Council and partners will be organised to deliver against that vision. Members can help with the 2030 vision, attending 'talkabouts' and using the toolkit in their own areas to have an honest dialogue with the public.

There is a need to develop a more inclusive economy through joined-up working across Directorates and partner agencies to understand what poverty looks and feels like. Initiatives such as volunteering and supporting those with a learning disability need to be further developed alongside better transport options (particularly rail); access to housing (including affordable housing) and improving educational opportunities whilst taking into account the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The Local Plan opens up a huge amount of land for growth, particularly at Junction 36/37. The Employer Pledge has already been signed by more than 150 businesses and will put more back into the local economy. Barnsley College has been heavily involved in providing career inspiration for young people, connecting with digital companies to redesign course content. Adult Education is a good way to tackle poverty in the Borough as it provides life skills, increases employability and can make a real difference in communities. In some areas the Community Shop provides adult and community learning. There is a need to persuade Sheffield City Region (SCR) and Central Government to increase funding for this.

Witnesses were congratulated on attaining such a positive result from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and for their attendance and contribution.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

16 Provisional Education Outcomes in Barnsley 2019

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

- Nick Bowen, Executive Principal of Horizon Community College and Joint Chair of Barnsley Alliance
- Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director - People, BMBC
- Nina Sleight, Service Director, Education, Early Start & Prevention, People Directorate, BMBC
- Richard Lynch, Head of Barnsley Schools' Alliance, People Directorate, BMBC
- Jane Allen, Service Manager, Pupil Inclusion, Attendance & Education Welfare, People Directorate, BMBC
- Liz Gibson, Virtual School Headteacher for Children Looked After (CLA), People Directorate, BMBC
- Councillor Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee were provided with a report detailing the provisional education outcomes for children and young people in the borough at each stage of the National Curriculum, from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (age 4/5) to Key Stage 5 (A-level) for 2019, including Children Looked After (CLA) and those with Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND).

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to detailed questioning and challenge, the following issues were highlighted:

The Early Years sector has worked closely with children from deprived backgrounds for many years. There is a forensic analysis of data locally so that children are targeted individually for intervention as well as within cohorts. Comparisons are also made with national results and how they relate to Barnsley. Robust partnership arrangements are in place, working closely with families to ensure settings support children in the best possible way. Pupil Premium is used to deliver educational outcomes of those children who are most vulnerable, in attachment-friendly settings to enable a child to be ready to learn when they start school.

Barnsley should be particularly proud of its Key Stage 4 outcomes, good buildings and strong leadership. Barnsley schools are no longer at the bottom of the league tables and are now well above average, ahead of Rotherham, Doncaster and Sheffield, in some areas, which is a huge shift. There is still improvement to be made in terms of Progress 8 and Attainment 8, although performance on the latter is now close to the national average. Disadvantaged students are achieving higher results in Barnsley than non-disadvantaged students elsewhere. Out of 10 secondary schools in Barnsley, 8 are at average or above, with just 2 below average. The latter will be supported by the Barnsley Schools Alliance (BSA), which offers tailored support for schools who need help in making progress and in realising their ambitions using data to identify areas for improvement. Stronger schools will work with the leadership team, sharing good practice and challenging how the schools are

run. There is an ambition that wherever you live in Barnsley you will be guaranteed a good school.

Although English and Maths are important, the new OFSTED framework now focuses on a broader and more balanced curriculum, which is more appropriate for some students. In some instances in Barnsley, those schools with a broad and balanced curriculum are now performing better than those with a narrow focus on English and Maths.

Performance data suggests that girls perform better than boys, which is in line with national data. The reasons for this are unclear and are multi-faceted: they could relate to a poor start in life; pre-school/nursery experience; the pace of the curriculum; family expectations and parental education. What is crucial is that all children receive learning and support tailored to their needs.

Early Years outcomes and school attendance are Alliance priorities as they make such a difference to future lives. Another area of focus is the attainment of children with additional needs and inclusion. This includes attitudes around poor behaviour and how it is dealt with to ensure standards and attainment are high.

Members were reassured that the previous increase in fixed term exclusions is not linked to academisation. In fact, there has been a significant reduction in fixed term exclusions and academies have made significant progress along with other schools. There are a number of workable and helpful alternatives to excluding pupils such as an on-site wellbeing centre, nurture provision etc to ensure students' needs are met in school. Provision for excluded pupils depends on the individual circumstances of the pupil. When a child is excluded there is a statutory responsibility to ensure the pupil has 25 hours of education in place by day 6 of the exclusion. Wellspring Trust is commissioned to provide this. In addition, a Fair Access Panel meets every month to find excluded pupils an alternative place. Each case is examined in detail and tracked to make it fair. Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) placements are also commissioned around the Borough. It was pointed out that some pupils may be unable to attend school for physical reasons or refuse to attend due to anxiety issues.

Academies have been an overwhelming success in Barnsley and have taken school performance to a new height, which is not the case in other areas. All academies are part of the Barnsley Schools Alliance, are fully engaged and carry the expectation of challenge and support. All schools go through the same process regardless of their status. This partnership approach is the envy of other areas and demonstrates the strength of a sector led approach.

The Barnsley Schools Alliance works with individual schools to develop a package of tailored support for head teachers and other staff which is based on individual circumstances. New Headteachers are supported with their professional development. This is also the same with the Early Years service and includes childminders and Nursery settings.

The complexities of Elective Home Education (EHE) and how it works was explained to Members. When parents decide to home educate they must notify the school that they wish to remove their child from school. An advisor visits parents at home to explain how it works and what is expected. If the level of education provided is not of

a good standard, the advisor will work with parents to improve standards or look at supporting a move back in to mainstream education. An unhealthy culture is springing up around EHE, with unofficial Facebook pages offering advice to parents. There are many reasons given by parents as to why they wish to educate their children at home. Information as to the reasons are always recorded but they do vary. In some instances it is because of dissatisfaction around the current school. Efforts are always made to try to dissuade parents from this course of action.

The number of children in residential care refusing to attend school has fallen from a significant number around 4 years ago to just single children here and there. The Looked After Children Engagement Mentor works out of Springwell to encourage children back into the school setting. Pupil premium is also used to enable the child to engage. In the case of anxious and phobic children, the PRU within school is often used. School attendance of every Looked After Child is monitored daily and is improving year on year. Problems with non- Barnsley children are passed to the placing authority .

Transition from primary to secondary school is an area of concern, particularly for children with an EHCP in place. There is a need to ensure that for these children their plan is up to date to support the child effectively through transition. However, some schools are developing excellent practice, especially in the Dearne, where a SENCO has been recruited from the primary sector for pupils moving up to secondary school which helps to break down barriers between primary/secondary and change perceptions. Many children struggle when moving from a small primary school to a much bigger secondary school. This transition is part of the journey to independence and adulthood, with some children unable to cope and needing better support systems in place from an earlier age to ensure an easy transition. It is essential that although schools may do things differently, there is good engagement between primary and secondary schools and good practice is always shared. Services for children needing emotional and mental health support are provided by the CCG. Waiting times for treatment are reducing but still require further improvement.

The Chair congratulated witnesses on the performance of Barnsley schools and the role of the Barnsley Schools Alliance in driving forward performance and achieving better things for Barnsley children.

RESOLVED that witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution.

17 Referral to Sheffield City Region (SCR) Mayoral Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) Regarding Transport in Barnsley - Item For Information Only

Members were provided with an update report regarding the referral made by this Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SCROSC) regarding transport in Barnsley, highlighting the opportunity for Barnsley OSC members to share further comments with Cllr Ennis to shape this work prior to his meeting on 25th January with Clive Betts MP who is chairing a review of transport in the region.

RESOLVED that

(i) Members note the report, and

(ii) Contact the OSC Chair by email with any concerns they have regarding transport so that they can be raised with Clive Betts MP at the forthcoming meeting.

18 Exclusion of the Public and Press

RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

19 Children's Social Care Performance

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

- Mel John-Ross, Service Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, BMBC
- Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson – Children's Services (formerly People - Safeguarding)

The Chair congratulated Mel John-Ross on her recent appointment to the post of Executive Director, Children's Services.

The Service Director, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, introduced this item and provided Members with the monthly children's social care report, which contained an overview of the major performance indicators for children's safeguarding and social care for Quarter 2 (2019/20). The report included a summary section with an overview of performance, using RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ratings and direction of travel for most indicators. Barnsley's historical performance and comparisons with other local authorities were also included.

Issues discussed included re-referral rates, the Neglect Strategy, the Graded Care Profile, adoption timescales, agency workers, recruitment and increased social worker caseloads. Implementation of the Neglect Strategy has seen over 900 practitioners trained, increased awareness of the impact of neglect and more cases being referred.

Members were reassured that decision making is sound whilst acknowledging that poverty is complex and multi-faceted. It was also highlighted that re-referral rates for this period have come down and are now below benchmarking targets.

RESOLVED that: Members note the update and witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution

Chair