

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 4TH APRIL, 2018

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on WEDNESDAY, 4TH APRIL, 2018 at 1.00 PM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Kevin Rodgers

Councillors Richard A Jones, Jane Kidd and Paul Wray, J Mounsey (substitute for Councillor N Gethin and Councillor C Ransome (substitute for Councillor A Robinson)

Invitee: - Paul O'Brien, GMB

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor N Allan

Councillor N McDonald

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources

Steve Mawson, Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Director Finance

P Moffatt, Chief Executive, Doncaster Childrens Services Trust

Mark Douglas, Chief Operating Officer,

James Thomas, Head of Performance and Business Intelligence, Doncaster Childrens Services Trust

Lee Yale-Hames, Director of Finance, Doncaster Childrens Services Trust

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Healy, N Gethin and A Robinson

| | | <u>ACTION</u> |
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| 57 | <u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u> | |
| | RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for Appendix 1 of agenda item 6 Doncaster Children's Services Trust: Financial Overview Report on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the Authority holding that information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended may be disclosed upon consideration. | |

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| 58 | <u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u> | |
| | There were no declarations made. | |
| 59 | <u>MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 18TH JANUARY TO 8TH FEBRUARY, 2018</u> | |
| | <p>The minutes of the meetings held on 18th January and 8th February, 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>RESOLVED that: The minutes be approved as a correct record.</p> | |
| 60 | <u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u> | |
| | There were no public statements. | |
| 61 | <u>DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST: FINANCIAL OVERVIEW REPORT.</u> | |
| | <p>Doncaster Caring DGT theme</p> <p>The Committee received a financial update from Doncaster Children's Services Trust. Members were pleased that the recent Ofsted announcement showed the Trust was a good provider for the children and young people of Doncaster.</p> <p>The areas highlighted from the Part I of the report included the 2017-18 budget that was originally set at £46.3m and was continually being monitored throughout the year with the Council and the Trust's Finance and Infrastructure committee or Full Board. The Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2018-21 together with a Capital Strategy had also been established by the Trust.</p> <p>With regard to the front door services provided, it was noted that the number and level of complexity of children in care cases had continued to rise and at March 2018 was now at 555, therefore leading to an overspend of £2.9m for 2017/18 at Quarter 3.</p> <p>Due to the position it was noted that a Strategic Group had been established with the Council to address how the position could be managed.</p> <p>At this point of the meeting, in order to enable the Committee to consider the contents of Appendix 1 to the report, which contained exempt information, it was:-</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the public and press be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3</p> | |

(information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the Authority holding that information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended may be disclosed upon consideration of Appendix 1 to the report.

The details in the report were taken into account during discussions but Members stressed that they wished to hold the Trust to account, because the Council represented all children of the Borough and wished to ensure good practice and value for money was being provided. The Committee addressed the following areas:

Budget – during discussion the care ladder placement type and contract average activity was taken into account. It was stressed that the variances in agreed budgets were now regularly addressed with the Council through open discussions, outlining examples of demand and unexpected pressures. It was stressed that the number of children in care was now at its highest level since the Trust was created.

Members were assured that robust management of expenditure was in place both within the Trust and the Local Authority with the month by month expenditure trend analysis being addressed.

Complexity of cases – After hearing of the increased complexity of cases and demand throughout the year the Committee wished to understand the costs associated with this. The Trust outlined two examples of very difficult cases that could not have been planned for and how the children/young people were being supported, ensuring they were safeguarded and being cared for in an appropriate manner. Members addressed possible early behavioural signs and questioned when and how certain behaviours were recognised. The Committee acknowledged the care packages and measures that were required for such unexpected circumstances.

Individual Placement Cases – It was confirmed that the Children's Trust Resource Panel addressed individual placement cases with Local Authority officers responsible for commissioning, invited to attend.

Front door pressures – As was highlighted in the earlier discussion, it was reiterated that the current pressure on referrals was unprecedented with overspends in many authorities being reported. It was explained that the Trust had completed an analysis of latest published data to compare financial performance with other areas currently rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted. The analysis demonstrated spend per child in need and looked after child in Doncaster was below the median for this comparator group, and that the Borough performed similarly to areas with similar demographics. It was stated that a national survey by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) had highlighted the Children's Services were now the number one concern of Directors of Finance in the public sector.

When Ofsted and other regulators state a service was improving then the trend usually shows more children would be referred because there was more confidence in the service.

Members acknowledged that no-one could have predicted the increase in cases over the last three years and recognised the overspend was contributable to increased demand, however stressed the Trust needed to be prepared for the worst case scenario, and acknowledged that demand in 18 months time was unknown.

Planning for the future – In response to the Committee’s concern, assurances were provided that despite expenditure pressures and targets it was hoped that these would be met in future years whilst continue to provide a good aiming for excellent service. A Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2018-21, set out in the report, and capital strategy had been established and with support from the Local Authority would invest in operational assets. To also ensure a stronger future position the care ladder required reviewing.

The Committee was asked to acknowledge that strong investment had been made this year including the “Mocking Bird” project. The Trust was generating more money for the Children of Doncaster and had managed to secure additional funding from the Department of Education.

The Trust stated that it was committed to working closely with the Council and Team Doncaster to ensure a whole family based approach. It was highlighted that the Trust had taken time to raise standards and that had been achieved but now needed to ensure value for money.

Sustainability of a future model – in response to Members’ concerns, it was explained that work was ongoing with the Department for Education and the Local Authority to ensure the best and most efficient model was in place for future provision, which would include comparison of running costs with other good or excellent providers. The positivity of a future model was highlighted and the Committee was pleased with discussions that everyone clearly wished to provide a high quality service whether this be through a different model, but one that all parties would support.

Other issues addressed included:

- Contract variations set with the Trust;
- Difficulty in planning for the number of children entering the system. A 20% to 30% increase was difficult to plan for but improved intelligence data was now available;
- Suffering the effects of austerity and children increasingly becoming the victims of social deprivation;

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early help offer – The Committee was supportive in the thoughts that issues required addressing at an earlier stage and that it was the only way the future reduction in need would be achieved; • Single agency offer – it was stressed that this was a difficult challenge for partners, but a more robust single offer was an action that could prevent escalation of need and ensure there was no duplication of support. • Case audits – these were regularly undertaken, including when cases were referred to partners for support but has to be considered by the Trust for further intervention. • Partnership relations – this was noted as being good, with all agencies concerned with the safeguarding of Doncaster’s children working closely to provide the best supportive service. The Trust outlined that working with Team Doncaster, it was clear that everyone wished to provide a strong family approach, avoiding continued behaviours being passed from generation to generation; • Out of authority placements – it was noted that gradually children and young people have been returning to care within Doncaster, but only if safe to do so; • Trust resources – can be adjusted internally to ensure appropriate support was provided; • New Ofsted framework – it was noted that the new framework only commenced a few weeks prior to the meeting and it was difficult to assess what the Trust’s current position would be, however, it was hoped in all areas they would be outstanding. It was also stressed that it should not be forgotten that there needs to be an aspiration from everyone that the Trust strives to be excellent. Following discussion it was difficult to say whether the new framework would come with additional expenditure pressures, which would again be a burden on the public purse. It was outlined that to have a service that was excellent attracts better investment and staff. <p>RESOLVED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the discussion be noted; and 2. a further report be provided to the Committee if the same financial variances appear following Quarter 3 2018/19 | |
| 62 | <u>BEHAVIOUR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME.</u> | |
| | <p>DONCASTER LEARNING DGT THEME</p> <p>Prior to Cabinet’s deliberation, the Committee gave consideration to the Behaviour Improvement Programme in line with phase 2 of the Children’s Commissioning Programme (February 2017-August 2018).</p> <p>Members received a presentation and were informed that Doncaster</p> | |

had one of the highest rate of fixed term exclusions in the UK and was rising sharply, despite the Local Authority supporting schools to prevent this, therefore improving the position was a key priority of the Doncaster Learning Together Inclusion Programme and Children and Young People's plan.

The overall aims of the Behaviour Review were as set out below and Members addressed how they could be achieved and how the Local Authority would support it.

- To support and challenge schools to improve mainstream provision and prevent exclusion;
- To ensure that educational provision in the Council's specialist settings is of a high quality and meets the needs of learners;
- To put in place a continuum of provision at all levels that prevents the social cost of the current situation, ensuring that young people are safe, engaged and able to access meaningful futures; and
- To build a high level of ownership and capability in mainstream settings.

Throughout discussions Members expressed that the children of Doncaster must be safeguarded and nurtured in their community as much as possible whilst also ensuring our schools were fit for purpose. It was also stressed that schools needed to take more responsibility with challenging attendance practices.

Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) – It was recognised that there was a greater demand at the current time and recognised that some children were spending their whole school life in a PRU. This was not necessarily providing the best outcomes for that child/young person and required improved management, and through Big Picture Learning would provide an enhanced and improved model for better learning.

Patterns of exclusion – Where there were distinct patterns and areas of concern, the Local Authority would contact the Regional Education Commissioner and an example of a recent concern regionally was highlighted to the Committee where provision and support would be challenged.

Systems leadership and management of the pathway – Members addressed the 3 options that had been presented to the mainstream sector relating to how other areas in the country managed the behaviour pathway, and the "mixed economy" model whereby some resources were refocused towards outreach whilst ensuring that the delivery model anticipated specific need more effectively. It was stressed that extreme models would not be appropriate with the Local Authority undertaking a quality assurance role including challenge. It would be the responsibility of schools to provide alternative provision if mainstream was not the most beneficial for a pupil. It was suggested

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| | <p>that the Local Authority could provide a commissioning framework that schools could purchase.</p> <p><u>Violence in schools</u> – In response to concerns and examples with regard to the under reporting of violence towards staff in school, it was recognised that there were many behavioural issues in schools, but safeguarding and the duty of care for both pupils and staff was imperative. It was emphasised that the model proposed did not advocate violence against teachers and it was the management of schools that should provide protection against this. A Member reminded colleagues that with regard to this issue and the non attendance of pupils, School Governors should also be holding the Headteacher to account.</p> <p>RESOLVED: that the recommendations for consideration by Cabinet on 10th April, be supported.</p> | |
| 63 | <p><u>COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - CRIME AND DISORDER REVIEW - ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR TO SERIOUS CRIME PATHWAY.</u></p> | |
| | <p>DONCASTER LIVING – DGT THEME</p> <p>Councillor Kidd, Chair of the Community and Environment Scrutiny Panel presented the recent Crime and Disorder review by outlining a summary of Members’ discussions and recommendations.</p> <p>RESOLVED that: the Scrutiny Review be forwarded to Councillor Chris McGuinness Cabinet Member for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment for consideration.</p> | |
| 64 | <p><u>OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY REVIEW AND EVALUATION 2017/18.</u></p> | |
| | <p>Councillor Rodgers, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the Overview and Scrutiny Evaluation review report for the Committee’s approval, whilst highlighting the detailed programme of discussions undertaken by the review group.</p> <p>It was proposed that the review report be approved subject to the Scrutiny Panel names remaining and that consideration be given to the recording of the OSMC meetings and making them available on the internet, as is the current practice for Full Council and Planning meetings.</p> <p>RESOLVED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Scrutiny Evaluation report be agreed; | |

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| | <p>2. That Overview and Scrutiny Management and the Panel names remain but realign their work to the Doncaster Growing Together (DGT) theme; and</p> <p>3. The suggested recording of OSMC meetings and being made available on the internet, be supported.</p> | |
| 65 | <p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN 2017/2018 - MARCH 2018.</u></p> | |
| | <p>The Senior Governance Officer and Chair of the Committee reported the current Scrutiny Work Plan position to Members.</p> <p>With regard to the Council's Forward Plan of key decisions, it was noted that no further information was required by the Committee on any of the items detailed.</p> <p>RESOLVED: that the work plan, be noted.</p> | |