

**LEARNING, CULTURE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
25 JULY 2018**

**REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDRENS WELLBEING  
COUNCILLOR KATE BOOTH**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report sets out my portfolio priorities and provides an update on areas of my portfolio of responsibility that relates to the Learning, Culture and Physical Activity Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**2. ACCOUNTABILITY**

The City Council's Constitution clearly sets out the portfolio and areas of accountability. The portfolio that I have political accountability covers all the local authority children's services and social care. My post is required by law to held directly accountability for the effectiveness, availability and value for money of the local authority's children's services (particularly education and children's social care.)

Lead Member for Children's Services (LMCS)	This role requires close joint working and formal reporting with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture Cllr Jayne Francis to ensure appropriate accountability for statutory education functions contained within the LMCS role – including fair access to schooling for all children, high quality early years provision and children's involvement in public decision making.
Safeguarding Children and Young People	With statutory partners, the safety and wellbeing of all children.
Children's Services	Leadership, strategy and effectiveness of children's services – responding to the needs of all children and young people, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers.
Overseeing the Children's Trust	Oversight of the 'client side' role of the Children's Trust to ensure the delivery of agreed outcomes, KPIs and finances within the legal and contractual framework agreed
Overseeing Early Years	Ensuring a sufficiency of places and a citywide Early Years Health and Wellbeing offer.
Corporate Parenting	Political leadership on improving the lives of looked

	<p>after children.</p> <p>Ensuring all Council members, officers and services understand and actively promote the Council's responsibilities to looked after children.</p>
Lead Member for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Inclusion	Lead Member, working with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture, leading the SEND agenda across children's agencies and holding officers and partners to account for the delivery of the Birmingham SEND strategy.

### 3. SUMMARY OF KEY PRIORITIES

Over the last couple of months since taking on this role, I have been learning a lot on the City's role in some major areas that fall under this portfolio, going out and meeting key stakeholders and visiting some of our special schools.

The children's social care improvement journey has taken time and a great deal of work. A great deal of planning has also taken place with regard to the establishment of the Children's Trust, which was officially launched in April this year.

I do not underestimate the breadth of responsibility that falls under my portfolio and I have listened and read a great deal over the past few weeks. I am clear on what my initial priorities are and the areas that I am keen that progress is made over forthcoming months. These include:

- Oversight of the Children's Trust; and in particular ensuring that we continue to focus on improving the safeguarding of our children and young people
- Seeing through the next steps of the Early Years Health and Wellbeing contract which is improving how we target services to the children and parents who need our intervention; ensuring they receive timely target support locally via bringing together the health visiting service and children's centres.
- Looking at our Special Education Needs and seeking a review of work underway following the recent Ofsted Inspection into SEND last month for which we will receive feedback in September this year.
- Linked to the above is the education provision for children with Special Education Needs. I am keen to ensure that we work on a plan to look at how we can begin to work towards ensuring our children with special education needs are able to access schools locally within Birmingham that meet their needs with appropriate support. Far too many of our children have been placed in schools outside of Birmingham.

- Travel Assist, has had a great deal of focus over the last year. We need to improve and provide better alternatives for our children and young people using this service. We need to improve the current offer and where appropriate support children and young people with disabilities to become more enabled and independent.
- Childhood exploitation is an area of work in which everyone need to be more vigilant. If we see or notice anything, it is all our responsibility to report it. I am pleased to note that social workers, the police, voluntary sector and our schools are doing some great work.

#### **4. PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

As a City Council we do need to improve our partnership and joint working, although I do acknowledge and recognise that there are some great pockets of good practice in individual service areas. Children are everyone's responsibility; the proverb 'It takes a whole village to raise a child' does resonate. Many of the improvements we need to make to ensure that this City is a great city for our children to grow up and succeed in have to be a shared vision.

I am keen to work with our schools, voluntary sector, health, police, our families and all other partners to improve the opportunities for our children so they get the best start in life with aspirations which will see them succeed.

Child poverty and homelessness is a key issue within the City, the effects and damages it has on young children and their families is catastrophic. I know this is a difficult task and one that will take time but I am committed to work with my cabinet colleagues and other stakeholders across the City to ensure that children and young people and their families are prevented from becoming homeless in the first place.

I recently met with officers leading on Prevent and Resilience and was briefed on the work that officers they have been involved in. There has been a lot of training across all schools to assist in early recognition of radicalisation and setting out clear reporting lines. Birmingham works uniquely via the UNICEF Rights Respecting Award which produces resilient young people who understand how to avoid any extremist influences. Birmingham has 239 schools engaged with the UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award embedding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The programme helps to support long term safeguarding, help children develop personal resilience, improving attendance, attainment and progress, community engagement, and children's wellbeing,

#### **5 UPDATE ON KEY BUDGET ISSUES/KEY FUTURE BUDGET ISSUES**

The service is projecting a forecast General fund net deficit of £2.7m at the end of the financial year 2018/19, which is primarily attributable to an overspend of

£2.8m on Travel Assist and a £0.3m deficit on Day nurseries. The service is actively trying to identify offsetting mitigations in order to report an improved position for Period 4.

With regards the ringfenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) the service is looking to address the cumulative net deficit of £13.8 as at 17/18 year end (primarily the result of High Needs pressures) over the next 2/3 years from savings, efficiencies and reprioritising of High Needs provision within the DSG.

## **6 Challenges and Closing Summary**

This is a challenging portfolio as we cannot get it wrong. Safeguarding all our children remains this administration's key priority and in particular protecting our vulnerable children and children in need.

The budget also remains a fundamental challenge identifying and realising savings whilst ensure the impact is mitigated so the outcomes for our children and in particular our children is not compromised.

### **Latest Ofsted Inspection – Children's Services**

Ofsted carried out the fifth monitoring visit in April and found 'further progress in improving the quality of services for young people leaving care.' This was the first Ofsted monitoring visit to the Children's Trust.

The report noted that personal advisors know their young people well and are aware of and ensure young people have access to their entitlements. It also found that:

- ✓ There is a continuing focus on reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- ✓ A new pathway plan template is a 'significant improvement' enabling young people's views and aspirations to be better captured, although work is required to ensure these are completed in a timely manner
- ✓ There has been an increase in the number of care leavers in apprenticeships since the last inspection, and work-based taster days have been a success

The report highlighted areas for development, including the need to move to focus on quality over compliance, a greater understanding and use of reflection, and consideration of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) for children in long-term foster care.

I will be holding regular meetings with the Children's Trust Chief Executive Andy Couldrick and Chair Andrew Christie as well as the Governance arrangements to monitor and have oversight on progress going forward.

## **Ofsted Inspection – Special Education Needs**

Earlier in June we had an Ofsted Inspection of our Special Education Needs, we have not yet received the draft letter, which we anticipate receiving in September. Following which, I will report back to overview and scrutiny the findings of the report and our action plan. We are however, very aware that there are significant improvements required in this service area which were highlighted in our self-evaluation which was shared with the Ofsted Team. I am aware from reading the self-evaluation that there is some key work that needs to be led strategically and work on this has begun with our partners. This will build on the work that Cllr. Jones began when she established the Inclusion Commission, and the development of the Birmingham's Strategy for Send and Inclusion 2017-2020. I know from meetings that I have attended with special schools and meeting some parents and talks with our partners this is a multi-faceted area of work that needs a great deal of focus to ensure it is less complex and simplified. I am clear that we need to ensure that we work in partnership with the Trust and Health to provide information to parents so they are clear on the interventions and support they can expect for their child through their journey to adulthood.

## **Closing Remarks**

I would like to end on a positive note and thank our hard working senior managers and of course our dedicated front line staff who work directly with children both in social care and in education. I will be going out to visit our staff teams and continue to visit our school over the forthcoming months.

From what I have seen so far, there is some great work that is happening across the City which we need to recognise.

- UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award we have over 200 of our schools signed up to this from nurseries through to secondary schools. Human rights are fundamental and this includes children's rights so it is wonderful to see our young people so passionate about their rights and respecting others. They are so keen to help others learn about children's rights and why they are so important. Birmingham is a national leader in this area, it is fantastic to see so many schools getting involved and we will continue to support every school that wants to take part.
- Fostering and Adoption Services – I recently attended and was overwhelmed at some of the phenomenal foster carers we have supporting some of our children. It was evident that there was so much that carers and families get out of opening their home to children placed with them.
- Post 19 Mental Health Conference – 5<sup>th</sup> July, which the Post 16 Forum arranged. The Post 16 Forum sets strategic direction for the city and is sector-led and chaired by Jane Gotschel, Headteacher at Lordswood Girls School and includes representatives from all colleges, school sixth-form sector, UTCs, RSC and Public Health. Following on from which I met with Cllr Alex Yip who has worked with young people to develop a leaflet for

teenagers and young people in Sutton Coldfield and it is evident that there is more we can do to ensure that mental health and wellbeing is talked about and resources shared so young people are clear on support available.

It is going to be a challenging few years but I am confident we are on the right track and I look forward to working with you all and our partners to ensure our children have the best possible start; protecting them and providing them with the opportunities to thrive and realise their potential.

Councillor Kate Booth  
Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing