



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES
AND SAFEGUARDING)**

**MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, BOOTLE
ON TUESDAY 16TH NOVEMBER, 2021**

PRESENT: Councillor Burns (in the Chair)
Councillor
Councillors Carlin, Dowd, Murphy, Prendergast,
Webster, Wilson, Byrne, Sandra Cain, McDermott
and McDonough

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr. Mhairi Doyle, M.B.E.
Cllr. Diane Roscoe

23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Evans and his Substitute Councillor Dodd; Councillor Yvonne Sayers and her Substitute Councillor McGinnity; Councillor Spencer and her Substitute Councillor Brennan; and Father Des Seddon, Archdiocese.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with Paragraph 9 of the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declaration of personal interest was made, and the Member concerned remained in the meeting room but took no part in the consideration of the item and did not vote thereon:

Member	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Ms. C. McDonough	Minute No. 32 – Parent Governor Representative	She is affected by the outcome of the decision.

25. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

26. REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S NEET REDUCTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICE COMMISSIONED THROUGH ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HOUSING (EMPLOYMENT & LEARNING)

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Economic Growth and Housing updating Members on work relating to the performance of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 16TH NOVEMBER, 2021

contract delivered by Career Connect on behalf of Sefton Council in respect of young people Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET).

The report set out the background to the matter; the NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service; a snapshot of current performance on NEET; data on NEET and Not Known (NK) across the wider 16-18 group; NEET and EET data for vulnerable groups; the NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service Supporting Council Departments; the post-16 pathways partnership; and managing the impact of COVID.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- The barriers facing young carers in relation to their Carers' Allowance and other welfare benefits
- Could information be provided on feedback from young people relating to their experiences with participation in learning and work
- Reference was made to the table in paragraph 3.2 of the report, relating to the outline of current performance for young people within vulnerable groups targeted by NEET and EET, and a question was asked whether information could also be provided on looked after children under 18

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report and the progress made by the NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service be noted; and
- (2) the Head of Economic Growth and Housing be requested to provide Members of the Committee with information:
 - (a) on feedback from young people relating to their experiences with participation in learning and work; and
 - (b) In respect of the table in paragraph 3.2 of the report, relating to the outline of current performance for young people within vulnerable groups targeted by NEET and EET, looked after children under 18.

27. SEFTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education that provided information on the Sefton Virtual School and submitting the Sefton Virtual School Annual Report 2019-20.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 16TH NOVEMBER, 2021

The report indicated that Sefton Virtual School existed as a collaborative endeavour to ensure that the education of Sefton's Looked After Children (LAC) was a key priority for all professionals in line with the "One Council" focus on improving the lives of the most vulnerable. The aim of the Virtual School was to meet Sefton's Pledge to Children in Care to ensure that each child was supported to fulfil their potential in school. The report presented an overview of the Virtual School; pupils by Year Group at both the Primary and Secondary School; placement of pupils from Sefton and placement of pupils by local authority; information provided by Ofsted; attendance figures; Virtual School arrangements and duties; Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) spending; understanding pupil progression; and 2021 Key Stage 4 data.

The Sefton Virtual School Annual Report 2019-20 was attached to the report.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- Help and support provided by the virtual school for young people post-16
- Looked after children information once they had left school
- Data and information regarding Career Connect's work with looked after children
- How the virtual school contributed to Education Health and Care Plans
- Placement of pupils who were educated out of borough
- Placement of pupils in lower Ofsted graded schools

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report and the Sefton Virtual School Annual Report 2019-20 be noted; and
- (2) the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education be requested to provide Members of the Committee with:
 - (a) data and information regarding Career Connect's work with looked after children; and
 - (b) information on how the virtual school contributed to Education Health and Care Plans.

28. SCHOOL PLACES AND IMPACT OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS ON EDUCATION

Further to Minute No. 9 (2) (c) of 6 July 2021, the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 16TH NOVEMBER, 2021

Education on school places and the impact of housing developments on education.

The report set out the background to the matter; factors affecting the demand for pupil places; and pupil places and housing.

Appendix A to the report set out additional information on school places and the impact of housing developments on education including factors affecting the demand for pupil places; births in Sefton; housing developments in Sefton; housing with planning permission; housing without planning permission; pupil projections by planning area; and concluded by indicating that monitoring of pupil places was a complex process with many factors to consider.

Marie Stevenson, Pupil Place Planning Officer provided the Committee with updated information on the latest Sefton birth figures from ONS for 2019/20 which showed a reduction on the previous year from 2,632 to 2,447.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- Some secondary academy schools in Sefton starting to cap or reduce their intake numbers in Year 8 to 11 as they were unable to admit further pupils after the entry year due to their internal school organisational arrangements
- Potential capacity issues in Crosby and Maghull schools
- Increasing secondary pupil projection numbers in the Maghull and Aintree areas
- Primary school places in the Maghull and Lydiate area and the proposed expansion of Summerhill Primary by 1FE (30 places per year group)
- The number of out of borough children attending Sefton schools and the particular impact this was having in the Maghull and Lydiate areas
- The impact of new housing development in the Maghull and Lydiate areas on pupil places in these areas
- Residents becoming anxious in the Maghull area about the impact of new housing development not only on school places but also on health care provision
- Issues associated with some secondary schools in the Maghull area now being academies
- The published admission numbers for Deyes and Maghull High schools and whether they were reducing
- How the local authority would work with schools in respect of their published admission numbers

RESOLVED:

That the information contained within the report be noted.

29. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education providing a summary update in relation to school attendance since September 2021.

The report set out the background to the matter and provided a progress update on school attendance from September 2021.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- Pre Covid-19 attendance data
- DfE rules relating to the absence related code for Covid-19 which affected the Council's extraction of attendance data
- Excluding holiday requests, the scale of the problem of parents and carers not ensuring their children attended school; and geographical variations across the borough in respect of this problem
- Sefton's school attendance figures in relation to comparable metropolitan authorities
- Mental health issues being cited as the reason why a number of children have not returned to school; and measures and support for parents/carers and children when such situations arose
- The marked increase overall in schools' referrals to Complimentary Education
- The issuing of warning letters to parents in relation to school attendance who could not provide a valid reason for their child to be absent from school

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

30. IMPROVEMENT BOARD UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education providing an overview of the introduction of the Children's Services Improvement Board in July 2021, as a direct response to the Improvement Notice issued from the Department for Education in June 2021.

The report set out the purpose of the Improvement Board; the focus of the Improvement Board since July 2021; progress to date; and the future focus of the Improvement Board.

Appendix A to the report set out the terms of reference for the Improvement Board; its aims and purpose; the core membership, including representatives from the Council, partner members and stakeholder

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 16TH NOVEMBER, 2021

members; the role of the Chair; the quorum; the position regarding substitutes; frequency of meetings; and any changes to membership.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- The establishment of metrics to define what good or outstanding service looks like and how this could be used to show an improvement in service provision
- The need for Overview and Scrutiny to assist and critically challenge the work of the Improvement Board
- The Front Door of Children's Services and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
- How the Council commissioned its services; value for money associated with the commissioning process; and whether the services could be provided in-house and the Council's capacity to do so
- The potential for a Liverpool City Region or north-west regional approach to public sector service provision
- The opportunity for the Committee to analyse action and improvement plans would be welcomed and this may require a special meeting of the Committee to do so
- Serious underfunding issues affecting Children's Social Care
- The production of a glossary of terms in connection with the work of the Children's Services Improvement Board

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the content of the report to be noted;
- (2) the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education be requested to produce of a glossary of terms in connection with the work of the Children's Services Improvement Board; and
- (3) a special meeting of the Committee be arranged to consider in detail the work of the Children's Services Improvement Board and its improvement Plan and actions.

31. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer submitting the most recent update reports from the Cabinet Member – Children's Social Care, and the Cabinet Member – Education, whose portfolios fell within the remit of the Committee.

The Cabinet Member update report – Children's Social Care, attached to the report at Appendix A, outlined information on the following:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 16TH NOVEMBER, 2021

- Children's Services Improvement Journey;
- Practice week;
- MASH;
- Fostering;
- Adoption; and
- Corporate Parenting.

The Cabinet Member update report – Education, attached to the report at Appendix B, outlined information on the following:

- Education Excellence;
- Schools;
- St Teresa's;
- Covid; and
- Attendance.

Councillors Doyle and Roscoe attended the meeting to present their reports and to respond to any questions or issues raised by Members of the Committee.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- The data scorecard, covering key areas of children's performance, being developed to include a narrative of key areas relating to the Improvement Board; and the possibility of this being shared with Committee Members
- In respect of St Teresa's, it was noted that the Governing Body had taken the decision to ask the Council to consider consultation with a view to closing the school; and the responsibility for underwriting costs and the redeployment of staff at the school

RESOLVED:

That the update reports from the Cabinet Member – Children's Social Care and the Cabinet Member – Education be noted.

32. PARENT GOVERNOR REPRESENTATIVE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer indicating that the term of office for one of the current Parent Governor Representatives on the Committee was due to expire at the end of November 2021. The report sought to formally agree extending the term of office of the Parent Governor Representative concerned.

RESOLVED:

That the term of office for the Parent Governor Representative concerned be extended for a period of no more than two years, up to November 2023.

33. WORK PROGRAMME KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer reviewing the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of 2021/22; reporting on progress of the Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People Working Group; reporting on progress of the Impact of Covid 19 on the Primary Curriculum Working Group; identifying any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the latest Key Decision Forward Plan; and receipt of an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Work Programme for 2021/22 was set out at Appendix A to the report, to be considered along with any additional items to be included and agreed.

There was just one Key Decision within the latest Key Decision Forward Plan, attached to the report at Appendix B, that fell under the Committee's remit, and the Committee was invited to consider items for pre-scrutiny.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (1) the Work Programme for 2021/22, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be agreed;
- (2) the progress of the Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People Working Group be noted;
- (3) progress of the Impact of Covid 19 on the Primary Curriculum Working Group be noted;
- (4) the contents of the Key Decision Forward Plan for the period 1 December 2021 - 31 March 2022, be noted; and
- (5) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.