

## **Divisions Affected – All**

### **CABINET 25 March 2025**

#### **Local Area Partnership SEND Update Report of Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
  - a) Note the recommendations contained in the body of this report and to consider and determine its response to the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and
  - b) Agree that, once Cabinet has responded, relevant officers will continue to provide each meeting of the Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a brief written update on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations for 12 months, or until they are completed (if earlier).

### **REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND**

2. In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, the Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee requires that, within two months of the consideration of this report, the Cabinet publish a response to this report and any recommendations.

### **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

3. The Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the Local Area Partnership SEND Update at its meeting on 28 February 2025. The report set out updates from across the partnership since the Committee last received a report on SEND in September 2024.
4. The Committee would like to thank Cllr Kate Gregory, Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement, and Cllr John Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services, for attending.

5. As well as the Independent Chair of the SEND Strategic Improvement and Assurance Board (SIAB), Steve Crocker, the Committee was pleased to welcome representatives from across the Local Area Partnership:
- Lisa Lyons, the Director of Children's Services,
  - Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education and Inclusion,
  - Matthew Tait, Chief Delivery Officer (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board),
  - Chris Wright, Associate Director of Place – Oxfordshire (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board),
  - Jean Kelly, Deputy Director Children's Social Care,
  - Karen Fern, SEND Designated Clinical Officer (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board),
  - Maria Bourbon, Oxfordshire CAMHS Service Manager for Oxfordshire University Hospital Foundation Trust (Oxford University Hospital Foundation Trust),
  - Jules Francis-Sinclair, Co-Chair of Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum,
  - Caroline Kelly, Head of Integrated Commissioning – Start Well,
  - Nick Field, Children's Services Operations Manager,
  - Stephen Chandler, Executive Director of People and Transformation (Deputy Chief Executive).
6. The Chair had also invited members of the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) to attend and participate in the scrutiny of the item. In addition to the Deputy Chair of this Committee, Cllr Hannaby, who also sits on HOSC, Sylvia Buckingham and Cllr Haywood attended in person and Cllr Lygo attended virtually, at the discretion of the Chair.

## **SUMMARY**

7. In her opening remarks, the Cabinet member for SEND Improvement thanked those speakers who had addressed the Committee for sharing their experience and invited the Committee to note the progress made, thanked partners across the Local Area Partnership, and explained that the report outlined the progress made by the partners.
8. The Director of Children's Services emphasised to the Committee that the report was a strategic one and that it focused on the work of the Partnership to address the widespread deficiencies identified in the July 2023 inspection. It was important to recognise that joint-working between partners was the crucial means why the necessary turnaround in these areas could be effected.
9. The Committee had wide-ranging and detailed discussions and issues explored included cultural change, Artificial Intelligence diagnostic tools, capacity and demand, recruitment of educational psychologists, data and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), benchmarking, the SEND Youth Forum, and

school staffing budgets.

10. The Committee makes two recommendations to Cabinet. The first is that, in the interests of transparency and to aid scrutiny, both current iterations of the Priority Action Plan and the KPI report submitted to the SIAB should be published. The second is that there should be more clarity over the SEND Youth Forum.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

11. The Committee accepted that the report set out key data in narrative form. Previous reports, however, had included Red Amber Green (RAG) Ratings indicating progress against the various actions required and expected as part of the Priority Action Plan as agreed with the Department for Education. The Committee recognised that the intention was to present the information in a way that presented the information more clearly and which better outlined the progress and milestones achieved.
12. However, whilst paragraph 20 set out that the deep dives and stocktake meetings overseen by the Department for Education and NHS England had “demonstrated incremental progress”, the Committee considered that it would be of value to the Committee to be able to see and scrutinise the RAG Ratings.
13. The Committee noted the concern that it would not necessarily be ideal to publish the KPIs in the public domain because some of the data was unverified and required validation. It also heard that the data lacked detailed analysis and so there was a concern that presenting it without context might have been unhelpful.
14. The Committee did not consider that a sufficiently weighty reason not to publish the information. It would be simple to mark the data as unverified and to explain that it was subject to change, for example, with verification and validation being expected at a certain point in the future. Whilst providing context might be more challenging, the Committee considered that it would not be unreasonable for it to be expected to ask questions of clarification if such were necessary. The ability of the Committee to scrutinise the information before it for the benefit of the Council and of residents is hindered when it is not provided with the data to do so adequately.
15. Similarly, the Committee noted, in paragraph 19 of the report, that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that were submitted to the SIAB on a monthly basis had again not been included as part of the data. These, the Committee considered, would show areas that were on target as well as areas that might benefit from closer scrutiny. When it received a LAP Update at its meeting on 20 September 2024, the Committee had raised concerns about a seeming lack of transparency on the part of the Board and its work and had been assured that discussions were then ongoing about how to improve this. It was pleased that there had been some progress in that regard but was of the view that the publication of both the KPIs and the RAG Rating in the public report to

the Committee would have contributed positively to both openness and transparency but, also, to effective and impactful scrutiny.

16. The Committee was grateful to the Director for agreeing to send members of the Committee the data but it was of the view that, in addition to that, they should be published whilst they are still current.

**Recommendation 1: That the Council will publish the most recent Key Performance Indicators reported to the SIAB as well as the RAG Rated Priority Action Plan tracker.**

17. The Committee was pleased to note the progress made with regard to the development of the SEND Youth Forum and that it had had four meetings and undertaken a number of initiatives. However, there was a concern raised in Committee that not all members recognised the information presented to them in the report in relation to the SEND Youth Forum as entirely accurate. The Committee noted the Director's assurance that the information was accurate as presented and that the SEND Youth Forum does have a work plan and that it has developed some initiatives as set out in the report. The Committee also noted that examples were provided of individual issues raised by the SEND Youth Forum which had led to actions, including separating out the preparing for adulthood and employment opportunities.
18. The Committee believed it would be helpful, both for members of the SEND Youth Forum, the directorate, and the Council more broadly for the Council and the SEND Youth Forum to set out clearly how members of the Forum would be engaged and how the Forum would be regarded as a consultative body vis-à-vis its members. This view arose from a discussion about the SEND Youth Forum Seal of Approval where there was a slight lack of clarity as to whether it had been approved by the Forum as a Forum or whether it had been approved by members of the Forum.
19. The Committee does not, at this stage, have a view on how the Forum should operate but it notes, as paragraph 7 of the report, that it is described as "an integral part of our improvement arrangements". It would, therefore, well behove both the Council and the Forum to be clear about expectations.

**Recommendation 2: That the Council should set out how the views of the SEND Youth Forum, and its members, will be taken into account and how they will be presented, including any consultation prior to the publication of any reports about the Forum.**

## **FURTHER CONSIDERATION**

20. The Committee expects to consider another update on SEND in the Local Area Partnership in the autumn of 2025.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

21. Under Part 6.2 (13) (a) of the Constitution Scrutiny has the following power:  
'Once a Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter a formal report may be prepared on behalf of the Committee and when agreed by them the Proper Officer will normally refer it to the Cabinet for consideration.
22. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2 (3) iv) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Scrutiny Committees.

Anita Bradley  
Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex:	Pro-forma Response Template
Background papers:	None
Other Documents:	None
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