

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 16 March 2017

JOINT SESSION WITH CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL, 16 JANUARY 2017

Introduction

1. At Performance Scrutiny Committee's meeting on 22 September 2016 the council's Statutory Lead Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services, Cllr Melinda Tilley, extended an invitation to committee members to attend a meeting of the council's Corporate Parenting Panel.
2. Cllr Tilley is the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Panel's purpose is to act as a champion for all Oxfordshire's looked after children and care leavers, to monitor their outcomes, and ensure that all partners are engaged in supporting their needs.
3. Several Performance Scrutiny Committee members had expressed a wish to attend a meeting of the Panel. The meeting on 16 January had been arranged to give members a better understanding of pressures on the council's budget for Children, Education and Families and of statements in recent quarterly performance reports that our numbers of children in care were higher, and rising faster, than those of comparable authorities.
4. Present from this committee on 16 January were: Janet Godden (also a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel), Mark Gray, Patrick Greene, Jenny Hannaby and Charles Mathew. At the beginning of the meeting the Panel Chair stressed that the council in its entirety is the corporate parent, and all councillors are welcome at any meeting.

Exempt Information

5. The Annex to the report is exempt. The public should therefore be excluded during consideration of the Annex because its discussion in public would be likely to lead to the disclosure to members of the public present of information in the following category prescribed by Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended):

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information);

and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, in that disclosure would distort the proper process of open competition and would prejudice the position of the authority in the process of the transaction and the Council's standing generally in relation to such transactions in future, to the detriment of the Council's ability properly to discharge its fiduciary and other duties as a public authority.

Summary

6. In summary, discussion during the meeting covered two subjects:
 - i. the council's placement strategy for looked-after children, including the cost and impacts of the delay in delivering the council's new children's homes in Thame, Eynsham, Didcot and Witney. Members were satisfied that matters are being pursued as far and as fast as they can be. The Panel Chair will consider what action should be taken forwards to the Council.
 - ii. the issue of growing demand experienced in the early help and social care teams, which is feeding demand for placements. Members heard that this is not a question of more children being ill-treated, but of increased reporting. Activity levels around Child Protection plans remain high.
7. There followed a discussion of new initiatives within Children, Education and Families Directorate that it was hoped would ease pressures in the longer term.
8. Performance Scrutiny Committee will maintain its very keen focus on Oxfordshire County Council's children's services and will continue to scrutinise performance in this area both routinely and when particular issues arise.

RECOMMENDATION

9. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the report.**

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