

# **Cabinet**

## **Tuesday, 18 July 2023**

### **ADDENDA**

#### **6. Reports from Scrutiny Committees (Pages 1 - 6)**

Cabinet will receive the following Scrutiny reports:-

- People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on SEND and Staffing Changes in Children's Services

#### **7. Business Management & Monitoring Report - May 2023 (Pages 7 - 8)**

*Cabinet Member:* Finance

*Forward Plan Ref:* 2023/031

*Contact:* Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes,  
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Report by Director of Finance **(CA7)**.

Paragraph 27 of the Financial Monitoring Report to Cabinet in May 2023 noted that the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services had agreed an increase of 5.0% to firefighter pay effective from 1 July 2023. This was in addition to a 7.0% increase agreed to be effective from July 2022.

Annex 2a has been updated to include two virements required to increase pay budgets in the Fire & Rescue Service to reflect these agreed increases for 2022/23 and 2023/24 using funding for pay inflation held centrally.

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**Divisions Affected – All**

## **CABINET**

**18 JULY 2023**

### **REPORT OF THE PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: SEND and Staffing Changes in Children's Services**

Cllr Nigel Simpson  
Chair of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
July 2023

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
  - a) Agree to respond to the recommendation contained in the body of this report, and
  - b) Agree that relevant officers will continue to update Scrutiny for 12 months on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations, or until they are completed (if earlier).

#### **REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND**

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

#### **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

3. Five members of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee submitted a written request in accordance with Part 6.2 8 a) of the Constitution for an extraordinary meeting of the Committee to be convened on the following subject:

*In view of the recent staffing changes at the senior levels in Children's service, affecting particularly the work of the Council in education services, together with the data for 2022 revealed by the DfE on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 (updated 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023) in relation to the timings of EHCP and tribunal hearings, we the **undersigned five members of the committee request a special meeting of the People Scrutiny***

*Committee to discuss how the Committee should perform its scrutiny function in this area of the council's work in order to review whether the council now has sufficient resources and knowledge to provide the level of service expected by Oxfordshire's residents.*

4. The Committee met on 30 June 2023 and received a report by Anne Coyle, Interim Corporate Director of Children's Services on Education and Health Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) Timeliness.
5. The Committee was grateful to Cllr Liz Brighthouse, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children, Education Services, and Young People for presenting the report and to Anne Coyle, Interim Corporate Director of Children's Services, and to Stephen Chandler, Interim Executive Director: People, Transformation & Performance, for attending to answer the Committee's questions.

## **SUMMARY**

6. Cllr Liz Brighthouse introduced the report and reminded the Committee that the figures should be seen in the context of the significant funding problems facing local government more broadly. The overspend to meet Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) needs was a significant challenge. The Interim Executive Director: People, Transformation & Performance accepted that performance had not been acceptable and that significant improvement in communication and performance were necessary. That improvement had begun and would continue.
7. The Committee accepted that the wider funding context had an impact on the provision of SEND services in Oxfordshire. Nonetheless, the Committee noted that there had been significant problems in the timeliness of EHCNA completion that had been damaging to many families in the county. The Committee was pleased to hear a recognition of this and to hear that senior officers were committed to openness and transparency and to scrutiny.
8. The Committee heard that strong management action had been taken across Children's Services and that improvements had already been made and would continue to be made. The Committee shared the aspiration that swift, sustainable progress would be made and, during its meeting, approved the terms of reference for a task and finish group which would scrutinise in detail SEND provision and which would hear from a variety of stakeholders.
9. As in previous meetings, the Committee heard from parents and carers who raised the issue of communication with the Council being challenging. The Committee was pleased that offers of meetings were made to parents.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

10. There have been significant problems that have affected the Council's performance in the area of SEND notably demonstrated in that it has been reported by the Department for Education's data on 8<sup>th</sup> June, which places Oxfordshire as the Local Authority second least likely to meet the 20 week EHCP deadline. This situation has previously been compounded by difficulties in communication with parents and carers, with the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and with individual members undertaking casework, though the Committee has noted a refreshing improvement recently. Given that the Council has taken decisive and significant steps to change this and to improve, the Committee's view is that an important aspect of this improvement is to repair relationships with those who have experienced the consequences of this underperformance. One crucial aspect of the Council's delivery and performance of SEND and EHCPs relates to those senior staff responsible for delivering it. The Committee was informed by Stephen Chandler, Interim Executive Director: People, Transformation & Performance at the meeting that significant management changes had been undertaken. It is the view of the Committee that this information should be placed in the public domain. Recognising that there may be issues of confidentiality, the Committee recommends that the Council communicates these changes to parents and carers via a press statement.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council, insofar as it can within any potential restrictions relating to confidentiality, provides assurance to local parents and carers that the Council has taken significant steps to address its underperformance around SEND via a press statement detailing the recent changes within the management of Children's Services.***

## **NEXT STEPS**

11. The People Overview & Scrutiny Committee will review the published Cabinet response to this report and its recommendations at the meeting of the Committee after Cabinet's response in accordance with part 6.2, 13(f), of the Constitution of the Council.

12. The Committee will be exploring SEND Improvement in a task and finish group and will be considering the matter at subsequent Committee meetings during the coming year.

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# Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

*Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested<sup>1</sup> and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.*

*This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.*

## Issue: SEND and Staffing Changes in Children's Services

**Lead Cabinet Member(s):** Cllr Liz Brighthouse, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services

**Date response requested:**<sup>2</sup> 19 November 2023

### Response to report:

*Enter text here.*

### Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
That the Council, insofar as it can within any potential restrictions relating to confidentiality, provides assurance to local parents and carers that the Council has taken significant steps to		

<sup>1</sup> Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

<sup>2</sup> Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received<sup>9</sup>

## Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

address its underperformance around SEND via a press statement detailing the recent changes within the management of Children's Services.		
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**Business Management & Monitoring Report  
Forecast Position as at the end of May 2023**

**CABINET IS RECOMMENDED TO APPROVE THE VIREMENTS AS DETAILED BELOW:**

Directorate (CD = Cross Directorate)	Month of Cabinet meeting	Month of Directorate MMR	Narration	Budget Book Line	Service Area	Permanent / Temporary	Expenditure + increase / - decrease £000	Income - increase / + decrease £000
CD	Jul	May	Delivering the Future Together & Transformation	COD3	Communications, Strategy & Insight	T	2,000	0
				VSMMGT	Strategic Measures (Increase funding from reserves: Transformation Reserve as per recommendation in report).	T	-2,000	0
			Substance Misuse and Rough Sleeping Grants	PH1 & 2	Public Health Functions	T	1,762	0
				VSMMGT	Strategic Measures	T	0	-1,762
			Fire Service pay award - 2022/23 Full Year	COM4-2	Fire & Rescue	P	1,149	0
				VSMMGT	Strategic Measures	P	-1,149	0
			Fire Service pay award - 2023/24 Part Year	COM4-2	Fire & Rescue	P	678	0
				VSMMGT	Strategic Measures	P	-678	0
Grand Total							1,762	-1,762

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