

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY

SELECT COMMITTEE

21/03/2019 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor Ahmad (Chair)
Councillors Curley, Davis, Harkness, Phythian, Stretton (Vice-Chair) and Azad

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Fielding	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise
Mark Stenson	Head of Corporate Governance
Andy Collinge	Head of School Support Services
Patsy Burrows	Head of Service – Children Looked After and Care Leavers
Sian Walter-Browne	Constitutional Services

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions received.

5 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Value for Money Select Committee meetings held on 24th January and 5th February 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

6 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD TO NOTE

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings held on 22nd January and 5th March 2019 be noted.

7 SCHOOL PLACES APPLICATION PROCESS

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of School Support Services which provided a briefing and update on the school places application process.

Members were provided with a statistical analysis of the allocation of school places over recent years to, which included the following:-

- Places Available.
- Take up of places.
- The percentage of residents who are offered a school place of choice (1st and 2nd preferences).
- The number of parents missing the school places application deadline.

- An overview of schemes and initiatives designed to assist parents when applying for a school place.
- Overview of the current school place plans
- Future plans to increase parental choice.

Members were informed that the application process was completed online for allocations and in-year transfers. There was huge pressure on places, particularly at secondary level, due to school closures and an increasing population, and there were a number of projects under way to increase places and parental choice.

Members asked for and received clarification of the following:-

- Redirection – this occurred only where none of the expressed preferences could be met. This could be due to a parent expressing only one preference or it could be because the application was late and the chosen schools were already full. Pupils would be redirected to the nearest school with a place available. It was understood this was a major source of complaints to Councillors where parents did not like the schools offered. The Council was looking to build up a small surplus of places and support all schools to become good or outstanding, which would greatly reduce the number of complaints and appeals.
- People on waiting lists being displaced by new arrivals – when a pupil moved into the borough they had by law to be allocated a place at a school. Where schools were full, this would go through the Fair Access Panel and Fair Access admissions would take priority over those on the waiting list.
- Pressure being predicted – the authority now had much clearer figures and would anticipate a better ability to predict growth in the future.
- Clarksfield – due to expand this year.
- In-year transfers – usually occurred where a family moved house or were unhappy with the current school, sometimes because a child on the waiting list had been offered a place.
- Information to parents – the services was seeking to understand why applications were late and whether there were any common themes that could be addressed. Those that applied late would usually have limited choices. The research would show if there were any particular geographical areas that had more late applications than others.
- Appeals – main block of secondary school appeals would be heard in June and primaries before the summer break.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. A further update be provided in 12 months.

The Leader of the attended for this Item and Members gave consideration to a report of the Head of Business Intelligence which reviewed Council Performance for December 2018.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Performance Report for December 2018 be noted.

UPDATE ON ADOPTION PERFORMANCE

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Service - Children Looked After and Care Leavers which presented the Adoption Annual Report and an overview of the Adoption Scorecard for 2017 to update the Committee on the performance of the Adoption Service in relation to the Adoption Leadership Board performance indicators. The report also provided an update on local, regional and national developments in adoption.

Members were informed that since the government's focus on Adoption Reform and the development of the Adoption Leadership Board Scorecard in 2012, an annual briefing had been presented to the Committee to provide an overview of Oldham's performance in relation to the Adoption Leadership Board performance indicators, as well as an update for Members on local, regional and national developments in adoption.

In line with the Adoption Reform Agenda, Oldham had joined with Bolton, Bury, Blackburn with Darwen, Rochdale and Tameside to develop a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Adoption NoW, which went live in November 2017. The Annual Adoption Report provided an overview of the progress of Oldham's children through the adoption process, Adopter Recruitment and Adoption Support.

The Adoption Scorecard measured performance against a set of indicators over a 3 year period. The Adoption Scorecard for 2018 had not yet been published and as a result, it was not possible to provide up-to-date comparisons with Statistical Neighbours and England averages.

Members noted highlights of Oldham's performance included:-

- 35 children had been adopted in 2018 compared with 25 children in 2017.
- The cohort of children adopted included a high proportion of children considered hard to place due to age, ethnicity, health needs or being part of a sibling group and this would inevitably have an impact on adoption timescales for children.
- The A1 indicator measured the average time over a 3 year period between a child becoming looked after and moving in with the adoptive family, for children who had been adopted. Oldham's performance had improved from

469 days in 2016 to 447 in 2017. The 3 year average to March 2018 had further improved to 430 days and was only slightly above the Adoption Leadership Board target of 426 days.

- The A2 indicator measured the length of time between the local authority obtaining a Placement Order to matching a child with adopters, for children who had been adopted. Oldham's performance improved from 223 days in 2016 to 213 days in 2017. In 2018, performance in relation to the A2 indicator had deteriorated to 265 days. This was 144 days above the Adoption Leadership Board target of 121 days.
- The Regional Adoption Agency had increased the pool of adopters available to Oldham children.
- Oldham performed better than the England average for almost all Adoption Leadership Board measures in 2017, and better than its Statistical Neighbours against the indicators which measured adoption timescales.

Members asked for and received clarification on the following:-

- Recruitment of BME adopters – One of the aims of the RAA was to become a centre of excellence in such recruitment, especially recruiting from Asian backgrounds. This would increase the number of BME families for the RAA and enable them to be offered to other areas. The RAA was also very skilled in finding families for hard to place children
- Progress – there had been significant progress in the 12 months the authority had been in the RAA. The main identified risk in the future was around the uncertainty of the continuation of the adoption support fund past 2020.
- Ofsted inspection outcome – very positive with regards to both fostering and adoption. Determining lines of responsibility for performance between the individual councils and the RAA was an ongoing area of work.
- Adoption of multiple children by single parents – anyone could adopt. All applicants underwent assessment and the outcome of that would determine how many children could be adopted.
- Dividing siblings – only if a split was beneficial especially where there was no sibling relationship. Where there was a relationship, every effort would be made to keep them together which may mean they took longer to place.
- Nationwide adoption – children could be adopted anywhere, however the target was to place 60% of the children within the RAA. This year the target had been exceeded, with 68% being placed within the RAA.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. A further report be provided in Summer 2020.

Members gave consideration to the 2018/19 Work Programme.

Members discussed potential Items for the 2019/20 Work Programme and were invited to send suggestions to the Chair.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme for 2018/19 be noted.



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DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the date and time of the next Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Value for Money Select Committee, being Tuesday, 27th June 2019 at 6.00 p.m, be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.09 pm