

**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 26 October 2021**

Present:- Councillor Pitchley (in the Chair); Councillors Cooksey, Andrews, Aveyard, Bacon, Barley, C Carter, Collingham, Griffin, Hughes, Khan, Monk, Singleton and Thompson.

Apologies for absence: - Apologies were received from Councillors Browne, R. Elliott and Wilson.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at: -
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

39. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER AND 5 OCTOBER 2021

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meetings of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 21 September and 5 October 2021 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

41. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

42. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair provided an update on activity from the recent meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel that she and Councillors Browne, Collingham and Griffin from the Improving Lives Select Commission had attended.

The Chair also advised that she had attended a briefing for members of the Health Select Commission on Young Carers.

43. PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE START TIME OF MEETINGS TO 5PM

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, it had been proposed by Councillor Barley that the start time for meetings of the Improving Lives Commission be amended to 5pm.

On being put to the vote the proposal was declared as lost.

Resolved: - **That** the start time for meetings of the Improving Lives Select Commission remain as 10am.

44. SEND (SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITY) SUFFICIENCY PROGRESS REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion, the Head of the SEND Service and the Head of Children and Young People's Services Commissioning and Transformation attended the meeting to provide a progress report the implementation of the SEND (Special Education Need and Disability) Sufficiency Strategy in Rotherham. including updates with regard to the implementation of the SEND Sufficiency Phases 1, 2 and 3.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services noted that SEND Sufficiency Strategy set out a plan to look at meeting our emerging SEND provision needs against a structured profile of identified SEND needs in Rotherham with the three phases of SEND Sufficiency Strategy aiming to address key areas of need against a context of increasing demand for SEND services across the Borough.

The Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion made a presentation to the meeting that provided information on:

- The definition of SEND and the requirement that was placed on the Council to ensure sufficient provision of suitable educational provision for children and young people with SEND needs.
- How SEND Sufficiency was managed in Rotherham by the SEND Sufficiency Strategy.
- The progress that had been made in delivering the three phases of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy noting that Phase 1 had been completed and that Phase 2 was 80% complete.
- The objectives and activity included in Phase 3 including its focus on:
 - creating a specialist SEND campus in Dinnington.
 - combines rebuild of Newman Special, movement of upper part of Newman to Dinnington.
 - developing a Social, Emotional, Health Specialist setting in Rotherham.
- Future phases and potential objectives for the strategy.
- The recent Ofsted/CQC inspection of SEND services across Rotherham

Members expressed their concern regarding the amount of time that Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) were taking to be completed noting that in order to ensure that every child could access the correct support that these should be completed in a timely manner. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services noted that whilst the timely completion on EHCP's was very important, it was more important that each child got the right support, in the right setting and at the right time. The Cabinet Member noted that as a result of the actions carried out as part of the SEND review support could be delivered to children and young people without an EHCP being in place. The Assistant Director detailed the processes involved in establishing an EHCP for a child and noted that whilst there was a 20-week target for completing an EHCP that this timescale could be very challenging due to the number of stakeholders involved in the process. The Assistant Director assured members that whilst an EHCP brought together a single document to support a child's needs, support was accessible and would be provided before an EHCP was in place.

Members noted the importance of a safe and secure environment for all children, and especially for children with additional needs when accessing education and asked what plans were in place to support the children and families who would be impacted by the move of the Newman School to the site at Dinnington. The Assistant Director advised that this aspect of the move had been given thorough consideration throughout the planning processes involved in the school move. The Assistant Director assured members that parents and carers had been fully consulted with and involved in the plans that would ensure that each child could transfer smoothly and settle in at the new site. The Assistant Director noted that whilst the move would be challenging for some children he was confident that the right support was in place, and that ultimately the new building would better meet the needs of those attending.

The Chair asked whether the children and young people who would be moving to the new school site had been involved in the design and layout of the new school. The Head of Children and Young People's Services Commissioning and Transformation advised that the design of the new school had been carried out in a collaborative way and had involved students in co-production activities that had been facilitated via members of school staff.

Members asked for further information on the number of out of area placements that were made. The Assistant Director advised that he would obtain this information and circulate to members. Members asked whether the current SEND provision across the Borough was sufficient to cope with the increasing number of children with EHCP's or whether further provision would need to be developed. The Assistant Director confirmed that the growth in the number of children with additional needs and EHCP's was increasing and advised that a further needs analysis was scheduled to be carried out in 2022 that would ensure that the provision of services would continue to match demand. The Cabinet Member noted

the 2019 Government Review that had been carried out around SEND provision had emphasised the need to focus on providing wraparound holistic support locally as required, rather than solely focussing on EHCP's as a means to then deliver support.

The Chair asked how long the current SEND provision would be able to meet demand for. The Assistant Director advised that discussions were being carried out with the Department for Education regarding extra funding to alleviate any immediate pressures being felt in the system. The Assistant Director advised that it was important when considering SEND provision and the needs of children with additional needs that consideration was given to enabling provision across the entire education system. The Assistant Director advised that there would need to be further investment in providing the highest level of provision but that it was essential to look how children with less severe needs could be supported in mainstream education. The Assistant Director confirmed that Phase 4 of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy would look to deliver more SEND provision on mainstream schools. The Chair welcomed the plans to increase SEND support in mainstream schools.

Members asked whether there were any plans to relocate Hilltop School at Maltby as whilst the school provided an excellent level of education and support for its students the site it was located on was not ideal. The Assistant Director advised that the upcoming needs analysis that would be carried out in 2022 would consider the suitability of the buildings on the site and that discussions would be held with all stakeholders on potential future options.

Members asked when the Written Statement of Action that was being created in response to the joint Ofsted/CQC inspection of SEND services would be available. The Assistant Director advised that Written Statement of Action would be published in January 2022. The Cabinet Member noted the result of the recent joint Ofsted/CQC inspection of SEND services across Rotherham that had raised concerns about the effectiveness of processes in Rotherham with regards to SEND provision related to the provision of all SEND services that were delivered by other bodies as well as the Council with regards to SEND. The Cabinet Member noted the many positive parts of SEND provision noted in the inspection report including the Parents and Carer's Forum. The Cabinet Member assured members that the Council and all stakeholders were fully committed to developing services and delivering the best possible outcomes for all children and their families. The Assistant Director assured members that they would be kept informed with regard to the planned activity to address the areas of weakness that had been highlighted in inspection report.

Members asked for further information on the selection process that had resulted in the Wellspring Academy Trust being chosen to be the provider of the new Newman School. The Assistant Director advised that a rigorous and transparent selection process had been followed that had

been led by the Regional Schools Commissioner. The Assistant Director advised that this process had resulted in the recommendation being made to the Council that the Wellspring Academy Trust was the most suitable provider and should be appointed. Members sought assurance around the experience of the Wellspring Academy Trust in delivering SEND provision. The Assistant Director advised that the Wellspring Academy Trust had significant experience in delivering SEND provision and assured members that rigorous processes were in place to ensure that the Wellspring Academy Trust met and continued to meet the needs students and the school.

The Cabinet Member noted the role that the Improving Lives Select Commission had played in the monitoring and delivery of SEND provision over recent years and she welcomed members enthusiasm to involved in development of the revised SEND Strategy and needs analysis. The Cabinet Member suggested that members may like to invite representatives of the Parents and Carers Forum to the meeting when SEND was next considered by the Improving Lives Select Commission as it would add an extra dimension to the discussion.

Members asked whether there ever would be a situation where the SEND provision across the Borough would be able to a meet the needs of all children and young people with additional needs who lived in the Borough without the need to use out of area placements. The Assistant Director advised that whilst demand for and provision of SEND Services was constantly evolving there would always be a need for some out of area placements in situations where such a placement would best meet the needs of an individual child. The Cabinet Member noted that successful SEND provision across the Borough would be when all parents could be fully confident that the needs of their child would be assessed and catered for in an appropriate and timely manner.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion, the Head of the SEND Service and the Head of Children and Young People's Services Commissioning and Transformation for attending the meeting and answering members questions.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a further progress report on the implementation of Phase Three of the SEND Sufficiency and other activity surrounding SEND Sufficiency in Rotherham be brought to the March 2021 meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission.
- 3) That a written update regarding the opening of the Newman Special School at the Dinnington SEND Campus be circulated to members of the Improving Lives Select Commission by the end of

2021.

- 4) That the Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion liaises with Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission to arrange visits for members of the Commission to the Newman Special School at the Dinnington SEND Campus.
- 5) That a briefing be provided to the members of the Improving Lives Select Commission on the written statement of action drafted in response to Ofsted/CQC SEND Local Area Inspection once it is available.

45. CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion and the Head of the SEND Service attended the meeting to provide a report on the role of the Council in supporting the Social, Emotional and Mental Health of Children and Young People.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services noted that information that would be provided in the presentation that would be made by the Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion would be focussed on the role of the Council in the context of the provision of education in supporting the Social, Emotional and Mental Health of Children and Young People. The Cabinet Member noted that the issue was being considered at the meeting in response to concerns that members of the Improving Lives Select Commission had expressed regarding the impact of the pandemic on the Social, Emotional and Mental Health of Children and Young People.

The Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion noted that services for the support of the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) of Children and Young People was delivered by a wide range of agencies and delivery partners such as the local Clinical Commissioning Group and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. The Assistant Director advised that due to the number of partners involved, all who had different roles and responsibilities in addressing SEMH effectively was challenging, it was essential that all activity was coordinated in order to support children and young people with their SEMH post-pandemic.

The Assistant Director advised that the number of children who required support with their SEMH continued to increase at steady rate and noted the impact of the pandemic and the related restrictions that had resulted in an increase in children with these needs, especially at around transition points in the education system. The Assistant Director noted many of the issues of SEMH in children and young people were a result of the lack of socialisation during the pandemic.

The Head of the SEND Service affirmed that the emotional wellbeing of

children was a growing issue amongst children and young people of all ages and that this had been compounded by the impact of the pandemic. The Head of the SEND service noted that whilst during the pandemic children had engaged well with online learning that the return to school had been very challenging for some children.

The presentation provided information on:

- What Social, Emotional, Mental Health was and how it was defined in the SEND Code of Practice.
- SEMH in national, regional, and Rotherham context. It was noted the number of children with these needs had grown and was projected to increase further.
- The number of children and young people in Rotherham with SEMH needs and how this compared to other areas both locally and nationally.
- The number of children and young people with SEMH who also had an Education Health and Care Plan.
- Ongoing areas of focus with regard to SEMH including:
 - the challenges around the enhancement of outcomes and support for Children and Young people awaiting CAMHS or Neurodevelopmental support.
 - the introduction of mental Health Support teams in schools and the future extension of project.

Members sought further information on the provision of mental health teams in schools and whether this provision would be extended to more schools across the Borough. The Assistant Director advised that the mental health teams were led by a lead practitioner who could then access further support as required. The Assistant Director advised that having this resource available in all schools would be very beneficial but noted that the current provision and allocation of teams across the Borough was based maximising the outcomes from the resources that had initially been available. The Cabinet Member provided further information regarding the Mental Health Trailblazer and on the number of schools that had been involved in pilot, noting that the schools involved and engaged well with the scheme. The Cabinet Member assured members that whilst specialist mental health support may not be available in all schools that pastoral support in schools would identify children and young people who required support with their mental health needs.

Members noted that for future reports with regard to SEMH that it would be beneficial if representatives from partners such as CAHMS and RDaSH were present in order to provide a view of the situation regarding SEMH from their perspective.

Members sought assurance that processes were in place that would ensure that children and young people received appropriate support for their SEMH needs whilst specialist support services were being put in place. The Assistant Director advised that inclusion support services in schools were able to provide a good level of support whilst specialist services were being put in place and assured members that the level of support provided to children and young people would increase as required to meet their needs.

Members asked whether it was correct that if a child received a private diagnosis of a mental health condition such as autism that it may not be recognised by the Council and as such may not assist that child in gaining access to additional support for their SEMH needs. The Assistant Director noted that it was every parent's right to seek a diagnosis privately. The Assistant Director advised that the statutory processes around the assessment delivered by the Council involved a wide range of professionals who provided a wide-ranging assessment of a child's actual needs rather than just seeking put a label on their condition. The Chair noted that whilst a diagnosis may take time that she was confident that children and young people in Rotherham were receiving the support they required in advance of a diagnosis being made.

Members noted the limitations of the report that had been presented to the meeting in that it only provided information on SEMH from the perspective of how this was managed within the education service of the Council. Members noted that they would have found it beneficial to receive an overarching view of the issues surrounding children's mental health from all involved stakeholders. The Chair noted the limited scope of the report but stated that due to the importance of the issue and how children's SEMH had been impacted by the pandemic that it had been important to have the issue considered by the commission.

The Chair sought assurance that the findings from the wide-ranging survey that had been conducted by Children and Young People's Services with children and young people across the Borough on the impact of the pandemic on their wellbeing was being used to inform the development of services. The Assistant Director assured the Chair that the information that had been gathered was being used to inform to shape the delivery of activities related to education recovery across the Borough.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion and the Head of the SEND Service for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That information on the Mental Health Trailblazer pilot scheme be circulated to members of the Improving Lives Select Commission.
- 3) That the Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission liaises with the Chair of the Health Select Commission regarding a joint piece of scrutiny work regarding children and young people's mental health issues and services in Rotherham.

46. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme for 2021/22.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme for 2020/21 be approved.

47. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES

The Chair provided a progress report on sub and project group activity.

Resolved: - That the update be noted.

48. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

49. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items that required the exclusion of the public or press.

50. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Tuesday 7 December 2021 at 10am at Rotherham Town Hall.