

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday, 23rd January, 2018

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors Beaumont, Cusworth, Elliot, Fenwick-Green, Hague, Ireland, Jarvis, Khan, Marles, Pitchley and Senior.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cooksey and J. Turner and from co-opted member Mrs. J. Jones.

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

107. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Senior declared a personal interest in Minute No. 111 (Rotherham 'Voice of the Child' Lifestyle Survey 2017 – Borough-wide Report), being an employee of a charitable organisation which had participated in the Survey (although Councillor Senior herself had not participated in the work with young people). Having declared her personal interest, Councillor Senior took part in the meeting during consideration of the Lifestyle Survey item.

108. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

109. COMMUNICATIONS

The Select Commission discussed the following items:-

(1) Performance Monitoring of CYPS Scorecards – the Sub-Group membership would comprise Councillors Beaumont, Cusworth, Jarvis and Pitchley;

(2) Adult Learning – the membership of the Sub-Group undertaking this spotlight review during February, 2018, will be Councillors Clark and Cusworth; other Members interested in participating in this review were asked to notify the Scrutiny Officer;

(3) Members of the Improving Lives Select Commission have been invited to attend the visit to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which will be taking place on Tuesday, 6th February, 2018.

110. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12TH DECEMBER, 2017

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 12th December, 2017 and matters arising from those minutes.

Resolved:- (1) That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 12th December, 2017, be approved as a correct record, for signature by the Chairman, with the inclusion of a clerical error by the addition of Councillor Pitchley to the list of Members who had given their apologies for absence for that meeting.

(2) That, with regard to Minute No. 101 (Communications), it be noted that a letter of thanks had been sent to the Barnardo's organisation, for hosting the visit of Members to the ReachOut Project on Tuesday 9th January, 2018.

(3) That, with regard to Minute No. 103 (Domestic Abuse Update), a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission concerning the Domestic Abuse Strategy and delivery plan for services.

(4) That, with regard to Minute No. 103 (Domestic Abuse Update), it be noted that, on Thursday, 25th January, 2018, the Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission is to be interviewed by representatives of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council as part of the Peer Review.

111. ROTHERHAM 'VOICE OF THE CHILD' LIFESTYLE SURVEY 2017 - BOROUGH-WIDE REPORT

Further to Minute No. 45 of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 1st February, 2017, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Performance Assurance Manager (Children and Young People's Services), containing the key findings from the 2017 Borough-wide Lifestyle Survey. The report stated that the Lifestyle Survey had been open to schools during the three months from May to July, 2017, with pupils of Year 7 and of Year 10 being invited to participate.

Members noted that the questions had been made more appropriate for young people, after consultation with the Council's partner organisations which will ultimately use the data obtained from the Survey. Additional questions for 2017 were about youth centres, libraries, museums and also school councils and young people's health issues (especially dental/oral health).

In 2017, only five of the sixteen secondary schools in Rotherham had not participated in the survey. There had been a total of more than 3,800 participants, being 58% of young people in the Year 7 and Year 10 school cohorts. The Newman Special School had participated in the Survey for the first time, with questions devised for pupils of that School. The intention was that all Special Schools should participate in the Lifestyle Survey 2018. In addition, pupils who receive elective home education had participated in the Survey for the first time in 2017.

Each individual secondary school, special school and pupil referral unit would be provided with its own data set extracted from the Survey results.

The lifestyle survey results provided an insight into the experiences of children and young people living in the Rotherham Borough area and provided a series of measures to monitor the progress of the development of the aims to be a child-friendly Borough. The results would also provide a series of measures to monitor the aims in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The submitted report to this meeting included:-

- the 2017 Borough-wide Lifestyle Survey Report;
- the highlights of the Survey results which show areas which are showing improvement and are working well;
- the highlights of the Survey results which show areas which remain a cause for concern.

The Select Commission discussed the following salient issues about this Survey:-

The perception amongst young people of safety within the Rotherham town centre; comparisons with previous year's Survey results; Members suggested that the Survey in 2019 should include questions about safety within the refurbished Transport Interchange in the Rotherham town centre;

- the results show an increase in the number young people who are not yet feeling safe when visiting the Rotherham town centre, even though the anxiety about protests and marches has reduced;
- more young people are physically active and are eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day; by contrast, the incidence of consumption of drinks with a high sugar content is a cause of concern;
- the number of children and young people having breakfast has increased; Members questioned whether some of the children and young people may prefer to have a mid-morning snack instead;
- dental and oral health and the number of young people visiting a dentist at least once per year;
- test purchasing has shown that fewer young people are able to obtain alcohol and cigarettes in shops;
- data from previous years' Surveys has provided useful information to assist in shaping the Personal, Social and Health Education (PHSE) curriculum in schools;
- the Mental Health campaign for young people has made good progress

during the past year; there are pilot schemes taking place in a number of schools;

- the sharing of information from the Survey with Schools, enabling Schools to share the Borough-wide data with parents;

- The proportion of young people seeking apprenticeships and employment, upon leaving school, instead of joining further and higher education;

- The perception amongst young people of safety within the Rotherham town centre; comparisons with previous year's Survey results; Members suggested that the Survey in 2019 should include questions about safety within the refurbished Transport Interchange in the Rotherham town centre;

- The number of young people who are carers for their relatives (although not involving baby-sitting nor accompanying a younger sibling on journeys to and from school).

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the Improving Lives Select Commission notes that the appropriate measures from the Lifestyle Survey 2017 will be shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Child Friendly Rotherham Board.

(3) That the Improving Lives Select Commission suggests that the further analysis of the outcomes of the Lifestyle Survey should include:-

- : analysis of the provision of breakfast clubs in schools;

- : the progress of the mental health pilot schemes in schools (eg: has the scheme contributed to a reduction in the incidence of bullying in schools);

- : verify the accuracy of the data collected in the Survey, with reference to and comparison with other data sources (eg: Public Health in respect of dental/oral health);

- : continue the further refining of the Survey questions, to ensure that they are appropriate for children and young people.

(Councillor Senior declared a personal interest in the above item, being an employee of a charitable organisation which had participated in the Survey (although Councillor Senior herself had not participated in the work with young people); having declared her personal interest, Councillor Senior took part in the meeting during the Select Commission's consideration of this item)

112. CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Service Leader, School Organisation, Admissions and Appeals describing the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that children missing from education (CME) are identified, reported and tracked in order that suitable educational providers may be found.

The report stated that the term CME referred to children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and who are not receiving a suitable alternative education, which may be approved alternative provision or appropriate Elective Home Education.

Members noted that Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 required local authorities to make arrangements to establish the identities of children residing in their area who were not receiving a suitable education. This duty did not apply to children who were registered at a school and who were not attending regularly. Instead, that issue was addressed via attendance monitoring and persistent absence work.

The Council's Early Help Service has a responsibility to ensure that protocols are adhered to when a child is known to have left Rotherham and a destination school cannot be tracked. The CME lead officer, CME officers and the Early Help Attendance lead officers have a responsibility to support schools with the identification of children missing from education.

The Early Help Service has redesigned the reporting function and developed a new CME Performance Scorecard. One of the key changes to CME reporting is to include predominant issues captured for new children identified as CME, so that a better understanding of potential vulnerability can be established, alongside a focus on the outcomes for children who have been reported as missing from education.

A copy of the performance summary (scorecard) for Rotherham-resident children missing from education, for the month of September 2017, was appended to the submitted report.

The Department for Communities and Local Government had introduced the Controlling Migration Fund enabling extra resource to assist with key issues affecting the wellbeing of children and their progression in education, such as CME. Officers financed from this Fund spend a considerable amount of their time in schools situated in the Central locality of Rotherham.

Members of the Select Commission discussed the following salient issues:-

: the school attendance data about children whose families leave during school term-time for extended holidays overseas; these cases may be

kept open for a very long time and may be Safeguarding referrals; systems are also in place to obtain information from schools, as necessary and notify the Police, airports and sea ports about such children;

: every endeavour is made to record the ethnicity profiles of children, rather than record "not known"; the children in this category very often belong to families who move into and out of the Rotherham Borough area at very short notice and the task of identifying ethnicity is usually undertaken by the officers whose resource is financed by the Controlling Migration Fund;

: the arrangements whereby pupils are removed from the roll of a school;

: the monitoring of pupils' school attendance and absence from school and ascertaining the point at which a pupil becomes categorised as a child missing from education;

: the Early Help Service engages with children and young people who are carers at home for family relatives and may be absent from school as a consequence; such children and young people would not be categorised as children missing from education;

: the high incidence of school absence in specific areas of the Rotherham Borough;

: the recorded data about children missing from education will become more refined and detailed in future; this data would also be subject to review at quarterly intervals by the performance monitoring sub-group.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the Head of Service, Early Help submit a report to a meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission in six months' time, providing a detailed analysis of the recorded data about children missing from education and comparing such data with previous data on both a quarterly and an annual basis.

113. SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH (SEMH) NEEDS STRATEGY - UPDATE AND SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Head of Inclusion, Education and Skills, stating that, during a period from 2015 to 2016, the Council had commissioned an external consultant to support the preparation of a Strategy to address Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs in schools.

The report listed details of the existing strategy, which had now been in place for two years. Reference was made to the increase in the number of Rotherham school pupils excluded from school (both fixed-term

exclusions and permanent exclusions) during the period 2012 to 2015. After two years of the implementation and impact of the SEMH strategy, there has been a significant reduction in the number of pupils being excluded from Rotherham schools.

Members noted that a Task and Finish Group has been established to develop and prepare a new, co-produced SEMH strategy, involving representatives of the Education community, the Inclusion Service, the Early Help Service, Social Care, the Health Service and the Virtual School. The draft of this refreshed strategy is expected to be available for public consultation at the end of February, 2018, when the views of children, young people and parents will be sought.

The Select Commission's discussion of this item included the following matters:-

: the extent of financial sanctions imposed upon schools whenever a pupil is permanently excluded and whether the school should fund the cost of the alternative educational provision which the pupil(s) will receive;

: pupils at risk of exclusion from school, for whom attendance on a part-time basis may be limited to one hour per week at school; children of statutory school-age have the entitlement to 25 hours of education per week; there should be the continuous monitoring and recording of details of pupils who have a part-time timetable at school; the part-time timetable should have clear objectives with the aim of returning the pupil to full-time education as soon as possible;

: arrangements may sometimes be put in place, by schools in partnership, for individual pupils at risk of exclusion from school (thus avoiding the need for a pupil to join a pupil referral unit); examples were : short-term visits to other schools; temporary placements for several weeks on a different school campus; the formal managed move and eventual permanent transfer to a different school; these arrangements were established in a protocol agreed between the Local Authority, schools and academies; pupils who are out of school may also be considered by the Local Authority's Fair Access panel;

: the Local Authority monitors children and young people who are educated otherwise than at school and maintains close relations with the children and young people and their families; their views will also be sought on the revised SEMH strategy.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the Improving Lives Select Commission:-

(a) notes the positive direction of travel with regard to both the permanent and fixed-term exclusion of pupils from school;

(b) notes and supports the plan for a joint Social, Emotional and Mental Health strategy across Education, Health and Social Care;

(c) supports the suggested timeline, as now reported, for the development of a revised Social, Emotional and Mental Health strategy.

(3) That a report describing the progress of the development of the new Social, Emotional and Mental Health strategy be submitted to a meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission during September, 2018 and such report shall include the views of children, young people and parents on the development of the strategy.

114. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY - UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 47 of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 1st February, 2017, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Head of Service, Looked After Children, providing an update of progress and development in the planned three years' cycle of the Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy 2017 to 2021. The report also identified where further work was still required in order to achieve the agreed objectives of this Strategy.

The Select Commission noted that during November, 2017, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) had completed a re-inspection of this Council's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the final report of that re-inspection was due to be published on 29th January, 2018.

During discussion, Members raised the following salient issues:-

: ensuring the stability of placements, so that Looked After Children are not moved frequently from one placement to another;

: the initial health assessments of looked after children, involve a variety agencies;

: the good work and progress of the care leaving team and the good relations between the team and the young people who are the care leavers;

: the adoptions of older children (rather than babies); 55% of the children who are ready for adoption are in the hard-to-place category; every endeavour is made to find an appropriate, permanent adoption placement for children; the longest wait had been 1,600 days to place a child with a disability in adoption;

: sibling groups are able to remain together in the same placement, as often as possible; if there has to be separation, the children will be reunited at earliest opportunity; in addition, in cases of siblings being separated, the foster carers are expected to ensure that there is regular

contact with the siblings;

: the availability and support for of mother-and-baby placements and also of placements for older children and adolescents;

: adoption placements for children from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds; this Authority is a pilot area for a scheme to recruit more foster carers and adoptive parents for children from BME backgrounds; there is a regular dialogue with the Council of Mosques in order to try and recruit foster carers and adoptive parents who have a Muslim background;

: development of a pre-apprenticeship scheme for Looked After Children who seek apprenticeships with the Local Authority, enabling them to be able to prepare correctly for joining an apprenticeship scheme;

: the increase in the number of Looked After Children both in Rotherham and throughout the United Kingdom; every endeavour is being made to try and minimise the number of children being taken into care; consideration is also given to returning looked after children to their family home whenever possible;

: increased use of the Edge of Care system to help reduce the numbers of Looked After Children;

: there is confidence that there are fewer children being looked after by the Local Authority than would otherwise have been case without the implementation of the Sufficiency Strategy;

: the transition planning for support from Adult Social Care now begins when the young person is at an earlier age (currently 15 years' old).

Members were encouraged to attend the seminar about the recruitment of foster carers, which would take place on Tuesday, 6th February, 2018, at the Town Hall, Rotherham.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That a report about the Edge of Care system be submitted to the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission to be held on Tuesday, 24h April, 2018.

115. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place at the Town Hall, Rotherham on Tuesday, 13th March, 2018, commencing at 5.30 p.m.