

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 21 January 2019

Present: Councillor M D'Albert (in the Chair)
 Councillors N Bayley, T Cummings, M Hankey,
 J Harris, M James, N Jones, R Skillen, Smith and
 S Smith

Also in attendance: J Davies – Co-opted Member representing Catholic
 Diocese

Public Attendance: 2 members of the public were present at the
 meeting.

Apologies for Councillor R Caserta and Councillor K Leach
Absence:

OSC.308 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Councillors present declared a personal interest in any items relating to schools as they were governors at Bury Schools.

Joanne Davies declared a personal interest in any item relating to Our Lady of Lourdes R.C. Primary School and Guardian Angels R.C. Primary School as she is Head Teacher and Executive Head Teacher at the schools

OSC.309 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions under this item.

OSC.310 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That, subject to the inclusion of Joanne Davies being in attendance at the last meeting of the Committee, the Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 22 November 2018 be approved as a correct record.

OSC.311 PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS FROM SCHOOLS

Paul Cooke, Strategic Lead (Schools, Academies & Colleges) presented a report from the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People summarising trends in permanent and fixed term exclusions from the 2017/2018 academic year.

The information was analysed by gender, special educational need and the reason for the exclusion. Statistical data from national and neighbouring authorities was also used to provide context.

It was explained that reducing both permanent and fixed term exclusions is a key priority for Bury, in order to ensure that inclusive schools and settings provide improved experiences and outcomes for all children and young people through 'One Child, One Chance, One Partnership, One Bury'.

The report also contained an analysis of 'off-rolling' which was explained as year 10 pupils who were on roll in 2016/7 but were no longer on roll at a Bury school in year 11 in 2017/2018.

Information was provided on 'internal exclusions' in secondary schools detailing the number of lessons/sessions which pupils spend outside of the classroom, either in isolation or inclusion rooms.

High level data regarding Elective Home Education was also included and it was explained that more detailed analysis will be provided at a later date in a separate report following a review of casework and referral processes.

Paul explained that Bury had seen a rise of permanent exclusions in recent years and is currently twice the national average. 84 pupils had been permanently excluded in 2016/2017 which was up by 33 on the previous year.

Fixed term exclusions had risen both nationally and in Bury, however, Bury had seen a higher than national increase since 2015. All sectors had seen an increase, the most concerning rise was reported as being in primary. There had been 68 in 2014/15, 67 in 2015/2016, 105 in 2016 /2017 and 155 in 2017/2018.

The reasons for the high levels of exclusions had been linked to behaviour within the classroom. For the past 18 months work had been carried out with schools to explore alternative arrangements and provision. All schools were working together to bring consistent, collective practices and responsibility.

The numbers of permanent exclusions had reduced to where they were in previous years but this still needed to reduce further.

Analysis of school census returns had been undertaken and had identified 36 pupils who had been taken off roll at a Bury School in year 11. Destinations had been identified for 33 of the pupils and this information was set out within the report.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:

- Councillor Hankey referred to the measures that had been put in place to reduce the numbers of exclusions and asked what timescale was anticipated for figures to reduce.

Paul explained that head teachers had agreed to limit the use of the PRU and had brought in support to develop alternative scenarios. Mechanisms were now working and reductions were continuing in the current academic year. Paul explained that this would be an ongoing project across all schools.

- Councillor Hankey asked whether practices at other local authorities had been researched.

Paul explained that other local authorities' practices had been looked at but there isn't one single solution. Schools were working together to look at different approaches.

- Councillor Harris explained that as a school governor she had sat on exclusion panels and had been given a document which set out unacceptable behaviour. Councillor Harris asked whether this would be reviewed in light of the work being done.

Paul stated that measures were being put into place to deal with issues before exclusion became a possibility.

- Councillor Lucy Smith referred to the fact that schools were already finding it difficult in the current financial climate and asked how they could afford for extra measures to be undertaken.

Paul explained that resourcing is an issue for all schools and there was already a lot of money being spent across mainstream, special and independent non maintained special schools. There were around 130 young people being educated outside of the borough in independent non maintained special schools at a cost of £47,000 per pupil. The aim of the measures being put in place was to implement a preventative approach so that fewer pupils were referred to provision outside the borough.

- Councillor Bayley stated that the number of exclusions had been increasing for a few years and asked why work had only recently begun to reduce the figures.

Paul explained that a SEN inspection had identified a high number of exclusions in relation to SEN. This had then identified the issue across all pupils. As soon as the issue had been recognised work had started to rectify it and put the required measures in place.

- Councillor Cummings asked whether the figures included agreed moves between schools.

Paul stated that these would not be included as this would be one of the strategies implemented as a preventative measure to exclusion.

- Councillor James referred to elective home schooling and the reasons given by parents and carers to choose to home school. Councillor James asked whether this was sometimes used as a way of removing problem children from schools.

Paul stated that parents and carers of elected home educated children were asked for the reason behind the decision but this could be challenged more as the main answer was personal reasons which was very broad ranging. Paul reported that work was currently being undertaken to try to get home educated children into schools. This was being carried out by working closely with parents.

- Councillor Lucy Smith referred to the incidents of bullying and racial abuse that were set out within the figures and asked what work was being done with schools around this.

Paul explained that statutory agencies and voluntary organisations provide help and support when a need is identified.

It was agreed:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an update on the work being carried out to reduce the number of exclusions across the borough at a future meeting of the Committee.
2. That Paul Cooke be thanked for his attendance at the meeting.

OSC.312 SEN UPDATE

Karen Whitehead, Strategic Lead – Inclusion and Partnerships presented a report from the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

It was explained that in June 2017 Bury had a joint local area SEND inspection conducted by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission where a number of areas were identified as significant weaknesses. Bury Council and Bury Clinical Commissioning Group were required to submit a Written Statement of Action to Ofsted (WSOA).

The WSoA had been assessed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector and had been declared fit for purpose. It was anticipated that Bury would be re-inspected before 30 April 2019.

The inspection had highlighted the key areas of weakness as being:

- Leadership
- Local offer
- Co-production
- Joint Commissioning
- School SEN Support

Over the 18 months since the inspection work had been undertaken to turn the identified weaknesses into strengths.

Set out within the report was an explanation of the weaknesses that had been identified and what had been done to date improve and strengthen those areas.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:

- Councillor Harris referred to multi agency working and asked what had been done to ensure that communication happened between the different agencies.

It was explained multi-disciplinary teams had been established bringing together partners from health, social care and education providers.

- Joanne Davies referred to the partnerships and asked how they had been working since their establishments.

It was explained that the SEMH Partnerships were working within schools to facilitate a standardised approach to early identification. Inclusion managers have been appointed for the primary schools and recruitment was planned for a Secondary Inclusion Manager in spring 2019. Work has been done with schools on the basic provision to meet pupils' SEMH needs.

Work was being carried out with Healy Young Minds to offer an enhanced service around bereavement, mindfulness and work was being done within schools if stress or concerns were identified. This could cover issues such as exam stress, self harm and eating disorders.

- Councillor D'Albert asked how a young person can access Healthy Young Minds.

It was explained that there were link workers assigned to schools or schools could make the assessment if they were concerned.

It was agreed:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That Karen be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.

OSC.313 ADULT LEARNING SERVICE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor Jamie Walker and Julie Kenrick, Head of Adult Learning Services presented a report from the Cabinet Member for Communities.

It was explained that Ofsted had carried out a short inspection of the service in November 2015 when the service had been judged to continue to be a good provider. However, the Ofsted report had also judged that there should be 'support and challenge by elected members including the consideration of the quality of teaching and learning'.

As part of the National Leaders in Governance Project the service had successfully bid for and received two days of free consultancy in 2017 and an additional day in 2018.

Following discussions with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Communities it was agreed that one Elected Member from each township would be nominated to take the role of Learning Champion.

The Learning Champions were involved in one of the consultancy days and from this work an Adult Learning Advisory Group was formed. The group held its first meeting in October 2018 and had identified a lack of provision in Radcliffe when compared to Bury East.

The Terms of Reference of the Group were appended to the report.

Councillor Walker explained that the group would continue to meet four times a year and would produce an annual report.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:-

- Councillor Hankey asked whether the service provided non accredited training as well as accredited.

Julie explained that there was a range of learning options which were provided to meet the needs of all individuals. There were courses that were purely around learning for pleasure as well as courses in which a qualification could be achieved.

It was agreed:

1. That the Bury Adult Learning Service Advisory Group would submit its first annual report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in January 2020.

2. That Councillor Jamie Walker and Julie Kenrick be thanked for their attendance at the meeting

OSC.314 THE CHANGING EDUCATION LANDSCAPE - GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Paul Cooke, Strategic Lead (Schools, Academies & Colleges) presented a report from the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People providing background and context to the evolving governance of school improvement in a changing educational landscape.

Government set out its ambitions for a school led system of school improvement in the 2010 paper 'The Importance of Teaching'. The paper set out a school led system of school improvement, with governors, head teachers and teachers all having responsibility for improvement, to be accompanied by a changing role for local authorities.

A more clearly defined role for local authorities was set out giving them a remit to concentrate on delivering their core functions:

- Ensuring every child has a school place
- Ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met
- Acting as champions for all parents and families

This was accompanied by an expectation that local authorities would step back from maintaining schools with a shifting responsibility for school improvement to schools.

The school led model has evolved in Bury since 2010 bringing together the key stakeholders with an interest in the education system across Bury.

In May 2018 the Secretary of State published a consultation document on the principles for a clear and simple accountability system and linked to this the DfE set out its initial plans to support underperforming schools. The local authority continues to have a role in education but as a champion, convener and commissioner in relation to the education system and with a diminishing role in the direct delivery of school improvement services as this aspect is taken up by Teaching Schools, Multi Academy Trusts and others.

The Government has also sought to clarify the respective roles of Regional School Commissioners, Department for Education, Ofsted, Multi Academy Trusts and Teaching Schools in terms of accountability.

A revised Bury Strategic Education Board will provide strategic direction, governance and accountability across the local system and connect to wider regional and sub regional systems and partners.

Appended to the report was a presentation setting out performance against a range of measures with comparison with local, regional and national data.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:

- Councillor Hankey referred to schools transferring to academies and asked at what point the Council stops having responsibility.

Paul explained that the Council's role will increasingly be a facilitation one and focus on the quality assurance of the school to school support and intervention. The Local Authority does remain statutorily responsible for overall performance. The Council will produce strategies that will set out the Council's ambitions and priorities in relation to:

- School readiness
- Special education needs
- Inclusion
- Education
- Governance

The Local authority has developed and introduced a new risk assessment process to assess each schools performance and enable appropriate support and intervention to be brokered for school leaders and governors.

- Councillor N Jones referred to school budgets and the fact that a number of schools were in deficit. Councillor Jones asked what could be done about this issue.

Paul explained that the Council was working with schools on a deficit recovery plan.

- Councillor Harris asked whether governance arrangements could be put in place that schools and the local authority can work with.

It was explained that everybody involved with provision of education across Bury were working to a common objective and appropriate governance would need to be in place. All schools and trusts were committed to this and the Local Authority were working with schools, governors, academies, regional schools' commissioner and MATs to ensure that this work was done.

It was agreed:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive annual report at an appropriate time

2. That Paul be thanked for his attendance at the meeting

**OSC.315 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT
2017/2018 **FOR INFORMATION**

The report was included with the papers for information purposes.

Members were advised that if they required any information in relation to the report to contact the officer named.

COUNCILLOR M D'ALBERT
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.30 pm)