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Kirklees Council

Scrutiny Lead Member Report

Lead Member: Cllr Andrew Marchington : Children's Scrutiny Panel

Period of Update : From July 2019 – August 2019

Panel Highlights

Lead member briefings with:

- Strategic Director for Children's Services
- Service Director – Learning and Early Support
- Service Director – Family Support and Child Protection
- Cabinet Member – Children
- Cabinet Member – Learning Aspirations and Communities

Panel Activity and meetings

- 19th July 2019 - Educational Challenges ahead and progress update and action plan for attendance and exclusions, Number of Children in Care which included an update on future plans for children placed outside the district;
- 7th August 2019 – Scrutiny Call-in in respect of the decision made by Cabinet on the 16th July 2019 on Future Options for Almondbury Community School.
- 23rd August 2019 - Update on Exploitation Strategy and next steps and Ofsted report (Children's Services)

Outcomes:

At the Scrutiny Call-in, the Panel agreed that the Decision by Cabinet taken on the 16th July 2019 on Future Options for Almondbury Community School could be freed for implementation, however, recommended that Cabinet consider a number of learning points relating to:-

- Capacity - Whilst the Panel was reassured that there was sufficient capacity in the system, they acknowledged that if Almondbury Community School closed there would be limited choice at local schools from September 2020. The Panel felt it was not clear about where pupils would be allocated places in September 2020.
- Openness - It appeared that an assumption was made at the outset that the school was not viable and would fail a due diligence test for academisation. The Panel agreed that the rationale for making that assumption was not fully explained in the Cabinet reports, for example, the fact of the school operating a £500k deficit budget only became apparent at the July Cabinet meeting. In future the Panel requested that Cabinet ensured that there was better explanation within reports.
- The Panel agreed to consider regular updates on Almondbury Community

School.

The Panel welcomed the Ofsted report following the Inspection of Children's Services in June 2019 and agreed that arrangements should be put in place to organise an informal Panel session regarding improving partnership working and governance structures.

Monitoring Work

The Ad-hoc Panel on Elective Home Education will be meeting shortly to complete evidence gathering and will draft a final report in the near future for consideration by the Panel.

Looking Ahead

At the meeting scheduled for the 23rd September the Panel will consider an update on the SEND recommendations and an outline of progress made to date. The Panel will consider an update from the Chair of the Kirklees Children's Safeguarding Board outlining how Kirklees will implement the new arrangements for Children's Safeguarding and the Business Plan.

The Lead Member has agreed that the Panel will scrutinise the performance information from the Improvement Board and look at how the information is analysed and consider some anonymised casework.

General Comments

I would like to thank everyone for their constructive engagement with the work of the panel. The panel are looking forward to playing their part in the continued improvement of Children's Services. The aspiration to achieve an Outstanding Ofsted judgement is welcomed. A focus on effective partnership working; and looking at what information is collected and how it is used to get the best outcomes for our children and young people will help in that journey.

Cllr Andrew Marchington