

EXECUTIVE AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 31 October 2017

Present:

Councillor Simon Fawthrop (Chairman)
Councillors Nicholas Bennett J.P., Mary Cooke, Ian Dunn, Samaris Huntington-Thresher, David Livett, Alexa Michael, Keith Onslow (Vice-Chairman), Tony Owen, Ian F. Payne, Michael Rutherford and Angela Wilkins

Also Present:

Councillor Graham Arthur, Portfolio Holder for Resources

83 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies had been received from Councillor Robert Evans and Councillor Russell Mellor.

84 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In respect of item 13 on the Executive Agenda Councillor Bennett declared an interest as a Governor of Bromley College. In respect of item 6 on the Executive Agenda in the interests of completeness, Councillor Bennett declared that the Education, Children and Families Select Committee would be undertaking a scrutiny review of the Troubled Families Programme in January 2018.

85 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the following reports on the part 1 agenda for the meeting of the Executive on 7 November 2017.

(6) TACKLING TROUBLED FAMILIES PROJECT – UPDATE ON OUTCOMES AND GRANT DRAWDOWN Report ED18031

Members considered a report setting out expenditure on the Tackling Troubled Families (TTF) Programme being delivered in Bromley. The report also requested agreement to draw down grant funding from central contingency.

The TTF programme in Bromley was currently in Phase 2 of the national programme; 2017/18 was Year 3 of the 5 year Phase 2 programme. TTF remained a payment by results initiative. The national criteria was expanded

under Phase 2; the focus was now more holistic and had been broadened to allow for earlier intervention.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had increased the data collection requirements for TTF in order to evidence the new criteria. There was a requirement to submit to DCLG data for the national impact study, the Family Progress Data, the national Cost Savings Calculator, and Qualitative in-depth interviews with staff and families, alongside the ongoing audit requirements both locally and nationally.

The TTF Programme remained coordinated through the Bromley Children Project within Early Intervention and Family Support Services (EIFSS). The intervention and support was delivered through a number of work streams, primarily within EIFSS but also key partners including the Anti-social behaviour unit, Youth Offending Service, the Education Welfare Service, and services that supported families not in work.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Early Intervention and Family Support reported that the reward payment varied depending on the level of intervention that was necessary but that the attachment payment was a fixed sum. It was possible for the Local Authority to receive less than £800 for an intervention but this had not yet happened.

The Head of Early Intervention and Family Support also reported that the intervention target for October 2017 had been 75 and the Service had confirmation earlier in the day that in October 76 interventions had been completed. This figure required verification by Internal Audit.

In response to a question from the Chairman surrounding the £21,000 running costs, the Head of Early Intervention and Family Support explained that these costs related to the overheads of the service such as gas, electricity, water, premises, and furniture. It would be possible to provide Members with a full breakdown of the running costs on request.

The Vice-Chairman expressed concern about some information he had been given which had suggested that a policy was being operated by some sections of the NHS whereby Ritalin medication was not being prescribed to children with ADHD. The Head of Early Intervention and Family Support responded that she was not aware of any such policy not to prescribe medication. Any family who presented to the Service where there was a suspicion of ADHD was asked to attend an ADHD Parenting Programme prior to the commencement of any treatment. The Vice-Chairman requested that this issue be further looked in to as it would be useful for Members to have additional feedback.

Action Point 9: that the outcome of any enquiry made by the Head of Early Intervention and Family Support into the Policy and practices surrounding the prescribing of Ritalin to children diagnosed with ADHD be provided to the Committee.

In response to a question the Head of Early Intervention and Family Support provided an overview of the types of support given to families who presented to the Service. There was a key worker attached to each family and an holistic assessment of each family member was undertaken. Following this a robust action plan was developed in consultation with the family. The Service operated by consent and as such no family could be forced to take action that they did not want to take. However, if families wanted to affect change the Service would work with them and provide help and support. This could include help with issues such as improving attendance at school, employment, proper nutrition for the family, and attendance at the GP surgery. The success of the intervention was robustly monitored by Internal Audit.

In response to a question concerning whether there had ever been any conflict between the “one size fits all” national government policy and local needs, the Head of Early Intervention and Family Support explained one such area of conflict had been around school attendance. The Committee heard that if a child had school attendance as low as 20% it was a significant achievement for the family to sustain levels of attendance in excess of 80%. However the Government required levels of attendance in excess of 90%. The Service had argued that the reward should be for sustained improvement however the target had not been altered. The Service in Bromley had taken a decision to do what was right for local families even if it was sometimes at the expense of the reward.

In response to a question surrounding interventions in relation to domestic violence, the Head of Early Intervention and Family Support explained that the measure of success related to families moving away from the perpetrator to protect children. This was a huge step for many victims to actually take and the whole issue of domestic violence was very complex and challenging. There were very few refuges that would take in men and boys over 10 years old. The main aim of the Service was to support victims to end the cycle of domestic violence. To this end, a programme was being run for children who had witnessed domestic violence against their mother as the impact of this on children could not be underestimated. The aim of the programme was to help children to understand that a relationship that involved domestic violence was not a normal relationship to develop in to. The Service also ran the DVIP Programme, which was a programme for perpetrators of domestic violence. One of the main challenges with this programme was that before someone could commence the programme they had to admit and acknowledge that they were a perpetrator of domestic violence, and often perpetrators were unwilling or unable to do this.

The Chairman questioned what was meant by “children who need help” as this was a very vague criteria. The Head of Early Intervention and Family Support explained that this was terminology used by the DCLG but that there were approximately 17 sub criteria attached to ‘children who need help’ which further defined the criteria. The Head of Early Intervention and Family Support explained that the Outcome Plan which had greater detail on each of the criteria and sub criteria was available on request for any Members who would like further information.

In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Early Intervention and Family Support explained that as work was undertaken with families, when more issues requiring intervention were discovered the outcome plan for the family would be updated to require a longer intervention plan. The Service had taken a decision to do this very early on to ensure that vulnerable families were provided with the support they needed.

In response to a further question, the Head of Early Intervention and Family Support explained that the number of children within the Early Intervention Service indicated that if this service was not provided an additional 63.25 FTE Social Workers would be required within Children's Social Care.

The Committee congratulated the Head of Early Intervention and Family Support and her Team for the work they did in supporting very vulnerable families across the Borough. The Committee also noted that the Education, Children and Families Select Committee would be considering the work of the Service in greater detail in the New Year.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to approve the drawdown from contingency a sum of £796,000 for Tackling Troubled Families for 2017/18.

86 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006, AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

RESOLVED that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the items of business referred to below as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the Press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

**The following summaries
refer to matters involving exempt information**

87 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT EXECUTIVE REPORTS

Members considered certain reports on the Part 2 agenda for the Executive's meeting on 19th July 2017.

The Meeting ended at 8.35pm

Chairman