

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 FEBRUARY 2018

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

Report of Cath McEvoy, Executive Director of Children's Services

Cabinet Member: Councillor Wayne Daley, Executive Member for Children's Services

Purpose of report

To consider current performance and the budgetary position for services within the Committee's terms of reference.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee notes the current performance and identifies any areas for further scrutiny.

Link to Corporate Plan

The performance management information covers services in Children's Social Care and Education and Skills and is available via the Council's website . The Council's performance management arrangements overall are particularly relevant to 'Developing the Organisation'.

Key issues

This report is for discussion.

Background

1. The Council approved its current Corporate Plan in November 2013. Each year, Service Directors prepare a Service Statement which sets out priorities for their service in delivering the Corporate Plan over the coming twelve months together with a performance framework covering past performance levels and future targets. The performance measures are captured on a web-enabled system and current performance is updated regularly so that the most recent information is available to Members, officers and the public. All performance information is available via the Council's website to promote openness and accountability.

2. Members will be aware that a new Corporate Plan for the period up to 2021 has been drafted and is currently subject to consultation. It is expected that the final Plan will be approved by the County Council at its meeting on 21 February 2018 together with the medium term financial plan and the budget for 2018-19. These key documents will enable Service Directors in conjunction with Portfolio Holders to prepare Service Statements for the period up until 2021 for publication to the Council's website. Updates on progress in delivering against these targets will be brought to this Committee twice a year.

The Appendices to this report show the current performance information for services within the Committee's terms of reference and is summarised briefly below.

3. **Education and Skills:** With reference to Appendix A, performance is good in relation to: all measures on primary school achievement (numbers 3-8); take up of early education (no. 1); schools rated good that are vulnerable to a poorer judgement at their next Ofsted inspection (no. 13); permanent exclusions from school of Looked After Children [LAC] (no. 16); destinations of 16 and 17 year olds (no. 17 & 18); apprenticeship outcomes (no. 19 & 20); and timeliness of education and health care plans and transfers (no. 21 & 22).

However, performance remains short of target in relation to: permanent exclusions from schools (no. 9, 14 and 15); outcomes for pupils at key stage 4 (no. 10 & 11); and Ofsted inspections of schools (no. 2 & 12). Comments and the actions being taken for PIs that are short of target can be seen in Appendix A.

4. **Children's Social Care:** With reference to Appendix B, performance is good in relation to: placing children with NCC carers (no. 3); inspections of residential children's homes (no. 4); time scales for children moving in with their adoptive family (no. 5); timeliness of referral decisions (no. 9); duration of child protection plans and the volume of repeat child protection plans (no. 10 & 11); reduction in first time entrants to the youth justice system (no. 12); young offenders living in suitable accommodation and being in employment, education or training (no. 15 & 17); and the number of Supported Families identified (no. 19).

However, performance remains short of target in relation to: caseloads of social workers and independent reviewing officers (no. 1 & 2); time scales for deciding on an adoptive match and the duration of care proceedings (no. 6 & 7); long term LAC who have been with the same carer for 2 years or more (no. 8); re-offending rates [new definition] and use of custody (no. 13 & 14); care leavers living in suitable accommodation (no. 16), just short of target but improving; volume of early help assessments initiated (no. 18); and number of Supporting Families cases where there has been significant and sustained progress or continuous employment (no. 20).

Comments and the actions being taken for PIs that are short of target can be seen in Appendix B.

5. Finance position

- 5.1 The revenue position for Children's Social Care at the end of December 2017 is as follows:

Forecast Out-turn (£000) Children's Social Care 3,641 overspend.

Position: There continues to be significant pressure in Children's Social Care, however the financial position has stabilised with only a £19k increase to the forecast position since the September update.

Although there is improvement, it is still the relatively high level of looked after children which is creating the main pressure on children's services budgets. The number of Looked after Children was 390 at the time of the December budget report, a decrease of 21 since the 1st April 2017.

As stated previously, the main areas of pressure are in the number of historical Special Guardianship/ Residence Order Allowance payments and the relatively high number of out of county residential placements, this is partly linked to a shortage of special school places in Northumberland. There continues to be a reduction in the use of Independent Fostering Agencies.

The service received growth of £2.5million for 2017-18 which has been allocated out across a range of services. This included additional staffing in the Family Placement service, Safeguarding and First Contact teams, which may have contributed to the reduction in the overall number of Looked after Children. There was also additional funding to increase the budget for Foster Care Allowances and Special Guardianship Allowances.

Action: The Northumberland Adolescent Service is currently being reviewed with the potential to restructure these services and there is also a review of Foster Care Allowance and Special Guardianship rates that may reduce pressure on the budgets overall.

- 5.2 The Education and Skills service budget is under significant pressure in 2017-18 due to the increased demand from individual pupils with special educational needs. In particular the transport demand continues to grow in line with the demand for special school places.

Service level income is insufficient to cover staffing costs. This places small schools in the impossible position of identifying children who need SEND support but not being able to afford it from their income. The Chief Executive and Executive Director of Children's Services are well aware of the shortfall for 2017-18 and future years as it is likely this will require a strategic re-organisation of schools and academies and council cost saving measures which may involve staffing restructure.

There has also been one-off expenditure of £450k incurred in relation to the dilapidation costs required at Ridley Hall, the boarding wing of Haydon Bridge high School that is no longer in use. The lease has now ended on this building.

The unallocated savings across Children's Services overall that still are to be achieved relates to £1.8million estimated to be possible as a result of a restructure that took place in 2013/14. These savings were never made and based upon flawed assumptions. The corporate financial plan for 2018-19 proposes that the unallocated saving should be removed from the budget for future years.

If a school becomes an academy and has a deficit budget it is the responsibility of the council to make up the deficit from its core budget. This can represent very significant sums, for example in the case of Bedlington High School it is circa £1.2m. 63 schools across Northumberland are predicting a deficit budget position by 2020.

A review of the structure of schools is being considered, place planning and financial capacity are key issues. This links to a review of all budgets and statutory responsibilities across Education and Skills. We are seeking efficiencies for both the core budget and those funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant, in partnership with the Schools forum and regional academies commissioner.

The revenue position for Education and Skills at the end of December 2017 is as follows:

Final Out-turn (£000) Education and Skills 1,053 overspend (plus £1.8m unallocated saving not achieved)

Position: The final outturn position has decreased by around £39k since the September position. This mainly relates to the overachievement of SLA income across a number of services.

Appendices - Scorecards for services within the Committee's terms of reference:

- A. Education and Skills
- B. Children's Social Care

Implications

Policy	n/a
Finance and value for money	Many of the measures included in the framework have a value for money component
Legal	n/a
Procurement	n/a
Human Resources	Having enough experienced social workers is essential for a high performing Children's Social Care service.
Property	n/a
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	n/a
Risk Assessment	n/a
Crime & Disorder	The performance framework includes measures on offending.
Customer Consideration	The framework includes a number of measures relevant to providing services to customers
Carbon reduction	n/a
Wards	All

Background papers:

Details of the County Council's performance management arrangements including access to Service Statements and the Northumberland web-enabled performance system can be accessed at:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Policy/Performance.aspx#corporateperformancemanagementarrangements>

Report sign off.

Finance Officer	Alison Elsdon
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Liam Henry
Human Resources	n/a
Procurement	n/a
I.T.	n/a
Executive Director	Cath McEvoy
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Wayne Daley

Author and Contact Details

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