

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1 of the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY 5th OCTOBER, 2017 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor B. Francis in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Foster, Hunt, Jackson, O'Neil, Scullion, Stewart and Tye together with Mr. S. Williamson

Also in attendance:-

Mr. David Barker, Chief Executive, Springboard

Ms. Charlotte Burnham, Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships, Sunderland City Council

Ms. Karen Davison, Director of Early Help, Together for Children

Mr. James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Mr. Nigel Harrett, Deputy Principal and Deputy Chief Executive, Sunderland City Colleges

Ms. Lianna Hill, Sunderland Youth Parliament

Mr. Howard Kemp, Headteacher, Farringdon Community Academy and Chairman of Secondary Headteachers Group

Mr. Simon Marshall, Director of Education, Together for Children

Ms. Annette Parr, Lead Support and Intervention Officer, Together for Children

Mr. Thomas Newton, Sunderland Youth Parliament

Ms. Kim Roberts, independent Reviewing Officer

Ms. Gillian Robinson, Area Coordinator, Sunderland City Council

Ms. Stephanie Rose, Associate Policy Lead, Sunderland City Council

Ms. Joanne Stewart, Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Elliott and Smith and also on behalf of Ms. A. Blakey and Mr. A. Hopkins

Minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 6th September, 2017

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the of the last ordinary meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 6th September, 2017 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

Item 5 – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team – Update

Mr. S. Williamson made an open declaration in the above item as the Headteacher of a Sunderland Primary School with a Special Educational Needs commissioned unit based within it.

Performance Date in Relation to Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated Members on the current position in relation to the 'duty to participate', in particular, young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) and the proposals to improve performance in this area.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Karen Davison, Director of Early Help, Together for Children presented the report advising that partners were in attendance from educational and training establishments who had a particular responsibility for informing the local authority where young people were in relation to employment, education or training or whether their whereabouts were not known.

Ms. Davison drew the Committee's attention to the table at paragraph 4.1 of the report and advised that she was aware that the figures recorded for September, 2017 showed that the position of the local authority, regionally had changed; and continued to do so on a daily basis as providers continue to send in data; and that Sunderland were now in a mid-table position in relation to the percentage of young people NEET and not known.

Members of the Committee were informed that the eight key actions set out at paragraph 4.4 of the report were to be submitted for approval to the Education Learning Board to allow for governance and challenge and so that all key partners could work together in order to continue to improve performance before returning to the Scrutiny Committee with an update in March, 2018.

Councillor Hunt commented that the information within the report was only for the current year and did not allow for any comparison to performance in previous years; especially on the percentage of not knowns which she felt was a huge amount. Ms. Davison advised that the data had been gathered in August, 2017 and that the number of not known young people was always high at that time of year but she believed that this may be the way in which the data is reported and collected.

Councillor Miller referred to key action eight and the maximising of work experience opportunities and the previously Tyne and Wear Education-Business Link Organisation (TWEBLO) which used to exist. Ms. Rose advised that the organisation used to run a regional link for schools and businesses and that although TWEBLO was not around in the same format, through the Education Leadership Board they had partnerships in the city which try to continue to bring businesses and education together.

Mr. Kemp commented that they now looked more at what the young people had shown a particular interest in and looked to provide studies and work experience opportunities in line with these. He advised the Committee of the Work Discovery Week and the launch day held at the Stadium of Light in June, 2017 where young people were invited along to discuss opportunities with businesses, training and education providers. He felt this allowed the young people to be inspired by interacting with organisations to help improve the employability of the future workforce of the city. The launch day gave young people the chance to learn more about various industries and how they could develop new skills before making a decision on their future career.

In response to a further comment from Councillor Miller around the lack of a link with Nissan, one of the largest companies in the area, Mr. Kemp advised that Nissan was in fact a very active partner with Sunderland schools as were their supplier partner organisations. Ms. Rose concurred with Mr. Kemp and advised that Nissan was one of the key partner organisations that they had excellent relationships with but that they also had partnerships with other sectors and businesses across the region. She advised that the Work Discovery Programme was only one of the projects on offer and that schools also did a lot of work in their own right to prepare young people for leaving school and accessing employment or further education.

In relation to the Work Discovery Week launch, Ms. Rose advised that for the first time primary school pupils had also been invited to take part. Over sixty organisations had been on site for the launch day and having consulted with the task group they had already agreed that they would look to engage the primary school pupils again in the future.

Mr. Newton asked if the partners were informing the Committee that programmes and projects that were in place in the city were so cutting edge, how could they still have the highest percentage of not known young people in the region and was informed by Mr. Kemp that he too had been shocked by the percentage of not known young people in the city and had to agree that it was clearly about how the data was being reported. He also accepted that the Work Discovery Programme was not the right route for all of the young people in the city and that this was why they had to provide a range of programmes and projects to try and engage with as many young people as they could.

Mr. Kemp also advised that it was of vital importance that the partnerships and schools continue to work together with the support of Sunderland Colleges, Together for Children and the local authority and informed the Committee of an enterprise project, WIRES 2, that was being undertaken with funds allocated through the West Sunderland Area Committee. The project was specifically aimed at linking young people with vocational training opportunities and businesses.

Councillor Tye asked if those in attendance could advise what the secondary Headteachers thought of the current Connexions Service and the support that they gave schools. As a Governor of a school the feedback he received about the service was not always positive and it had been indicated to him that the service given now by Connexions was not as it used to be in the past. Mr. Kemp advised that he could not speak on behalf of all secondary Headteachers in the city but that he had a meeting next week with them where he was more than happy to raise the issue and gather feedback for the Committee.

Mr. Kemp went on to advise that schools now found themselves in the position whereby they had to look very carefully at how they were spending their available funds and work to do more with less. They would have to look at the service being provided by Connexions to ensure they were getting value for money.

Councillor Tye requested that a formal explanation for the high percentage of young people NEET and not known be given to the Committee. He commented that it was the role of the Scrutiny Committee to look into these sorts of issues and he did not feel that they were being involved early enough which would only be costly to the wider public in the long run. His own personal view was that this issue should be referred to Cabinet to consider, as, if the figures were correct, then this was a serious concern which needed addressing. He raised concerns that the Scrutiny arrangements around Together for Children were not good enough and proposed that a working group be set up to look into this area of concern further as he felt the report was missing key information and data and that this was not acceptable when being presented to the Committee.

Councillor Hunt asked what level of pupil exclusions there were currently and wondered if these were also increasing. Mr. Marshall, Director of Education, advised that the number of pupils excluded from secondary schools had fallen this year and agreed to circulate the figures in full to Members of the Committee.

Councillor Bell commented that NEET figures would have been affected by the budget cuts which had been introduced since 2010 but that the local authority were working hard to try and get business investment into the area through projects such as the IAMP, etc. If young people had no incentives to work towards then young people from other areas would access those employment and training opportunities that are created by the new initiatives and the young people from Sunderland would see themselves missing out.

Ms. Davison advised that she was aware that the Connexions service had been reduced over time so that there had been less personal advisers, etc. in place. From 2016 there had been no further reductions in those roles that dealt with vulnerable young people but it was ultimately up to the schools if they wished to buy into the service or not. A number of schools were now looking to purchase external support as there were other organisations which could look to provide a similar service to Connexions.

Councillor Bell commented that in the past there had been many more training opportunities in roles such as construction but that a lot of firms who had provided these were no longer around. He stated that it was no good for Central Government to push for local authorities to have skilled workforces and then not support the training providers who would be able to offer these opportunities to young people.

Mr. Harrett advised that the numbers of apprenticeships delivered by Sunderland College had increased significantly, although there had been a recent decrease in the figures due to the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, where previous non levy payers now had to make a contribution which they hadn't had to in the past. He commented that this had been recognised as a national problem since the introduction of the levy.

In relation to the data presented in the report he advised that a large number of young people would not start on college courses until September and even then

would not be counted in any data until after the first six weeks, so it was probably not the best time for the information to be shared with the Committee, as the data was gathered in August, 2017. He advised that the data that would be collected at the end of the October half term would have young people on courses and with training providers included and would provide a truer picture.

Mr. Barker confirmed this and advised that a lot of the training providers have an initial assessment phase after the first six weeks of any programme so they would be unable to provide the data required in the report until after this time. He informed the Committee that a number of training providers who worked with Springboard offered apprenticeships to young people and he was aware that the number of participants had increased therefore if they were to report back at a later date the information within the report would give a very different outlook.

Mr. Harrett went on to advise that all providers across the city were keen to work with the local authority to ensure that there was a good quality provision of training and apprenticeship opportunities available to young people. Providers were aware that not one size fits all for young people and were keen to offer a whole cross section of opportunities to best meet their individual needs. He had found that some young people simply did not know what they wished to do following school, or if they did know they were unsure as to how to access opportunities available to them; it could be a particular location puts a young person off or that they don't want to access the provision in the traditional settings and providers worked hard to support the young people in whichever way they could to get them to engage.

Mr. Barker advised Members that Springboard worked across the North East region and the level of coordination and partnership working in Sunderland was far greater than that in other areas.

Mr. Williamson referred to the previous minutes of the Scrutiny Committee whereby they had requested that a representative from the Connexions service be invited to a future meeting of the Committee and proposed that the concerns Members had about the service could be raised directly with them when they did attend.

In relation to key action four Mr. Williamson commented that it was not a SMART target and that the action as it was set out was not measurable. He stated that he would like to see very specific actions as to what was going to be done to 'refocus the work of the Connexions service'. He also referred to key action eight and 'exploring opportunities which are more partner focused which may enable Area Committees to commission bespoke interventions to reduce NEET and not knowns, and commented that he would like to know which models the service were looking at developing so that funds could be committed to them to help achieve the outcomes that were required to make those improvements.

In closing Mr. Williamson stated that the Scrutiny Committee had made it very clear through their discussions the need for Looked After Children and those leaving care were to be of the highest priority and this was not reflected within the eight key actions.

Ms. Davison advised that one of the key performance indicators for Together for Children was to increase the number of care leavers who were on pathways to employment and that this currently was RAG rated amber. She advised that she would look to have a more detailed response provided to Members of the Committee

on the current position, although it was a fair comment that they should look to be clearly identified within the key actions.

With regards to the Connexions Service, Ms. Davison informed the Committee that work had been undertaken to refocus the service and each of the Connexions Personal Advisers had been given a caseload of NEETS who they would work with on a regular basis to get into relevant training or employment and that there were now systems in place for staff to work towards.

Councillor Stewart commented that he struggled to understand why the report before the Committee was being considered at this time if the data was 'wooly' and asked why it was not being submitted at a more relevant time when the data was accurate, such as in three months' time once the initial assessments of training and education positions had been recorded.

He also raised the point that there being no historical data contained within the report made it difficult for any comparisons to be made and did not allow the Committee to see if any positive improvements had been made from previous years. Historically, the authority had always had quite a low not known figure so if the data within the report was recorded in August, 2017, at a time when a lot of young people were between programmes the position of not known young people was not being seen in the true context.

He asked that the Scrutiny Committee receive a further report on this issue that either excludes the data from August or had more up to date data as it was obviously felt that the figures provided were not reliable as they did not provide a true picture.

Ms. Davison advised that the national published figures recorded in December, 2016 had set out NEET figures as 4.2% and not known at 3.5%, giving a combined total of 7.7%, with the average Tyne and Wear figure being recorded at 6.2%. She also advised that a further report was due to be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in March, 2018 but that she could circulate the more up to date data to Members of the Committee in the meantime.

Councillor Stewart referred to the support from the Area Committees which had been referred to by Mr. Kemp and advised that he was aware that the North Sunderland Area Committee had looked to support projects but that he had not seen any coordinated assessment of the impact, if any, that these projects were having and asked if there was any information available to allow Councillors to see if the projects Area Committees were providing funding towards were worthwhile.

In response to a comment from Councillor Bell around the offering of apprenticeships within schools, Mr. Marshall advised that it was between £3,000-£5,000 contribution that schools had to make towards the apprenticeship levy and that ten primary schools within the authority had accepted that. The key challenge for the schools was that the apprentice had to be released for at least 20% of their working week. Schools were wary and reluctant to invest in the apprenticeship schemes without knowing what future budget restrictions they may have to make so it may be that they see an influx after April, 2018.

Mr. Marshall commented there were some fantastic stories to share in relation to Looked After Children taking up apprenticeship posts in the city and referred to the four positions offered at Northern Saints Primary School, the agreement of Everyone

Active and the Active Sunderland Board to offer positions through the apprenticeship scheme and how Looked After Children had been interviewed for positions within Council departments also, always looking to match young people to roles that were relevant for them.

In relation to the Connexions Service, Mr. Marshall advised that there was a more personalised service being offered whereby advisers would contact employers to ask them what they required and then go back to the groups of young people they had to identify those most appropriate for roles and support them through the process into the position.

The Looked After Children support into apprenticeships and training was working well and it was about how to develop this to offer the same level of support to all young people. He commented that it may be more appropriate for the Connexions staff who would be attending a future meeting of the Committee to take Members through what was being undertaken in those areas to develop this further.

Councillor Bell suggested that it may be beneficial for young people who had accessed the service to be invited along at the same time to give their views and experiences first hand.

Ms. Hill of the Youth Parliament advised that as a pupil at a secondary school in the city she had only encountered access to the Connexions Service halfway through Year 11 but had found that the service had been very personalised when she had accessed it. She commented that she was not aware whether it was down to the school or the Connexions Service themselves that there had been no involvement sooner but if it had have been provided sooner or even on more than the one occasion she could have seen the benefit from it.

In relation to the figure for not known young people, Ms. Hill advised that she was only one month into sixth form at that current time and was very aware of young people who were changing courses or moving from school to apprenticeships or training so could appreciate why the figures were probably not exact and agreed that it would have been more appropriate to have the data presented at a more relevant time.

Mr. Barker commented that in relation to apprenticeships, the levy scheme had only recently been introduced and was not embedded yet. There had been an impact on its initial introduction and the reactions from that had not yet settled down. There had been a lot of confusion around the technology not working and these issues were on a national level and it was expected that once this was rectified and the initial bugs were worked out then the current status would improve.

Councillor Scullion referred to issues that small businesses may perceive with offering apprenticeships and the commitment from them that was necessary at the beginning of the process. He asked what occurred in incidents whereby the employer failed to see out the apprenticeship to the end and if the apprentice having lost their position with the employer would then lose their college place. Mr. Harrett advised that the college would do everything possible to find an alternative for apprentices should they find that they part company with the apprenticeship provider. He explained it would be the first priority of the business engagement team to try and find a suitable alternative for the young person but that this was not always possible. At times when they had been unable to find another apprenticeship position they had

spoken with the young person and placed them on a more standard college course, related to their study topic, until a further apprenticeship became available.

Councillor Scullion commented that he had had experience of and employed an apprentice who had been left in this position and suggested it may be useful to have a back up list of potential employers who would be willing to bridge the gap between full time replacement positions being found as he was aware that this could be quite a common occurrence. There could be a scheme where employers sign up to agree to take on short term apprenticeships to cover moves by young people between employers when necessary. Small businesses, as he had earlier referred to, could not always make the commitment to longer term apprenticeships but it was within these small businesses that a lot of skilled trades could be learnt and they should not be missed out or forgotten.

The Chairman welcomed the report, thanking everyone for their involvement and contributions, and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:-

- i) The contents of the report and the information provided be received and noted;
- ii) The Director of Children's Services provide an update on performance in relation to NEET and Not Knowns to a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in March, 2018;
- iii) The Chair of Secondary Headteachers gather further information on the views and experiences around the Connexions Services and circulate this to Committee Members;
- iv) The Director of Children's Services provide more up to date data, once received, in relation to the number of NEETS and Not Knowns, following the October half term;
- v) The Director of Education circulate to Members of the Committee more detailed information on exclusion from school figures in the city;
- vi) The Director of Children's Service circulate the detailed action plans in relation to Key Action 4 in particular to Members of the Committee; and
- vii) The Director of Children's Services be asked to ensure that Looked After Children be clearly reflected within the eight Key Actions.

Chairman's Announcement

At this juncture, the Chairman announced that Ms. Rose Elliot, Parent/Governor representative on the Committee had offered her resignation following many years of involvement as she was no longer a parent/governor at a maintained school in the city. The Committee asked that a letter of thanks be sent to her for her valued contributions to the Scrutiny function.

3. RESOLVED that the Chairman of the Committee write a letter of thanks to Ms. Rose Elliott for her contributions to the Scrutiny function.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team - Update

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated Members on the provision and outcomes for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across the city and the implications of a local area inspection of SEN arrangements.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Annette Parr, Lead Support and Intervention Officer, Together for Children presented the report advising that the local area inspections focussed on three key questions; How does the local area identify children and young people who have special needs? How does the local area assess and meet the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs or disability; and How does the local area improve outcomes for children and young people who have special educational need or disability?

She took Members through the report advising that there were a lot areas marked amber through the RAG rating but that this could be because they had not yet had chance to investigate and be confident that these areas could be closed off and marked green.

Ms. Parr also drew Members attention to the national issues arising from the most recent inspections and the range of strengths and areas for development that had been identified through the most recent Ofsted inspections, along with a number of challenges that there were in moving the agenda forward, in order to ensure effective provision for the parents and carers of young people with special educational needs.

Mr. Marshall advised the indication from the regional and national inspection outcomes were not favourable and suggested that it may be beneficial for a small group from the Scrutiny Committee to undertake a piece of specialist work on the challenges faced. The Chairman suggested that this be an item for discussion between Councillor P. Smith, Chairman of Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee, Councillor N. Wright, Chairman of Scrutiny Coordinating Committee and Councillor Farthing, Lead Member for Children's Services.

In response to a query from Councillor Francis as to whether the aims and methodology used by the different organisations i.e. CQC, HMI, Ofsted, was similar. Ms. Parr advised that there was a joint inspection framework so they would hope that the methodology was synchronised across the board but colleagues from health services advised that HMI & Ofsted tended to be more rigorous inspections than those of CQC. The service were working with officers and groups that inspectors may wish to meet with and setting them challenges to prepare them for future inspections.

Mr. Williamson commented that it was exceptionally helpful as a Committee Member to have set out within the report the strengths; to see and celebrate, the concerns; to be sympathetic towards; and the challenges to be able to support.

In relation to statutory assessments, Mr. Williamson acknowledged that there would be a limited pot of funds allocated to these and that there were a lot more young people coming through for assessments who could sometimes be knocked back and this could be frustrating for individuals and families. He asked if there were times

when the available budgets prevented the young person from having the assessment carried out or was there a mechanism in place to draw down additional funding if needed. If it was that the assessments were budget led then it would be helpful if Officers could be honest and then schools would understand and could manage their expectations.

Ms. Parr advised that the assessments were not funding led and it was more about what the needs were for the individual young person and also what information was being presented to the panels. She informed Members that the challenge is that when schools are presenting information to the panels it is not as explicit as they have needed and the evidence base is not as thorough as it needs to be as the panel cannot make assumptions. Some schools do provide their information extremely efficiently and work needs to be undertaken with those that do not to ensure everyone is presenting information on the same level.

With regards to funding around the young person Ms. Parr advised that currently if a young person moved from mainstream education provision to a specialist provision they could agree that the funding in relation to that child went with them but the new funding arrangements would make this difficult as discussions were being had about removing the ability to do this which could present some real challenges in the future.

Mr. Marshall advised that up until April, 2017, Ms. Parr, the business manager and the case workers had all been based in separate buildings but now that they were relocated into a room together communications were much easier and improved. He also advised that they had attracted three new educational psychologists to the city whereby they had had issues in the past as there had been no interest in these positions when advertised. By December, 2017 there would be an educational psychologist in each Key Stage level, which had not been the case for a long time in the authority, and therefore the service would be able to do a lot more work with staff around assessing the needs of the young people of the city. An Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) does not always mean that the young person has to leave the mainstream school and they would hope that as improvements are made they could continue to provide additional advice and support so that the young person could remain in their school surroundings.

Councillor Francis asked if there was a recognised shortage of educational psychologists and was told that there was and was advised that educational psychologists had to complete special assessments and now be of doctorate level, with some experience held. Mr. Marshall advised that they had some trainees at university level but that they had not had the capacity at the time to monitor them. Now that the service would have the support structure in place to provide supervision they could look to nurture 'home grown' staff.

At this juncture it was moved and seconded that Councillor Stewart be appointed Chairman as Councillor Francis needed to leave the room.

Councillor Tye referred to the discussions with the DfE around the schedule for the new school and asked for an update as to where the process was at and was advised by Ms. Parr that Alan Rowan, Business Relationships and Governance Manager, was leading on the new school development but she was aware that they had been notified that the bid was successful and the site chosen for development. There had been four expressions of interest from the tender process and the DfE

were looking to meet with the Council's design team to look at drawing up a schedule to be finalised by July, 2018 with a look to the new school being open in September, 2018.

Mr. Williamson commented that his current site manager had lived on the proposed site for the new school and was aware of some localised issues which may be pertinent to the design stage of the process and suggested it may be beneficial for someone to have discussions with him so that this knowledge could be shared. Mr. Marshall advised he would pass this information on to Mr. Rowan to have those discussions although the local authority would suggest what they would like to see on the site, ultimately it would be the Regional Schools Commissioner who would make those decisions.

There being no further comments or questions for the Officers, the Chairman thanked them for their attendance and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that:-

- i) The arrangements for the inspection of SEND local area inspections and the implications for Officers, Members and partners be received and noted;
- ii) The Scrutiny Officer look to have a discussion with the Chairman of this Scrutiny Committee, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee and the Lead Member for Children's Services around the formation of a small group to look at the specific issue of SEND local area inspections;
- iii) The Director of Education raise those concerns shared around the site for the new school with Mr. Rowan and pass on contact details for further discussions to be had; and
- iv) A further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee

At this juncture, Councillor Francis re-entered the room and took the position of Chairman for the remainder of the meeting.

Independent Reviewing Officer Service – Looked After Children Annual Report 2016/2017

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which asked the Committee to consider and comment on the Independent Reviewing Officer Service – Looked After Children Annual Report for the period 1 April, 2016m-31 March, 2017.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman welcomed Ms. Kim Roberts, Independent Reviewing Officer who took Members through the Looked After Children Annual Report 2016-2017, providing updates in relation to developments which had been made since the report had been prepared.

With regards to Secure Accommodation, Ms. Roberts had advised that there were currently two young people from Sunderland who were placed in secure accommodation in other areas of the country and Councillor Tye was shocked at the distances that other family members would have to travel to visit these young people. When asked how frequently visits could be arranged and the reasoning

behind the placements, i.e. was it because this was the only accommodation available? Ms. Roberts advised that the decision of where to place young people was made by the secure panel and that they could not influence that decision. She advised that there had been a case recently whereby a young person had been unhappy when placed in accommodation based some distance from their family home and the Panel had taken the young person's views on board and found a placement nearer to the Sunderland area.

In response to the involvement of the IRO's once a young person has turned 18, as queried by Councillor Stewart, Ms. Roberts advised that if they were care leavers who remained in supported living they would continue to see the IRO but if they were living with family at that time then they would not. Councillor Stewart commented he was curious to see what impact the closure of supported living accommodation would have.

Mr. Williamson commented that it was quite clear that the report painted the picture that there was still a lot more to do within the service but it was absolutely clear that as a practitioner they could see the improvements being made in the IRO services. He advised that through the attendances at meetings and services received there were very clear cases whereby it was clear that the IRO service had worked to ensure developments were made. There would always be issues within a service of this type and clear challenges ahead of them and if there was anything this Scrutiny Committee could do to help the service in anyway Ms. Roberts need only advise them of this.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Roberts for her attendance at the meeting and there being no further questions, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that report be received and noted.

Annual Work Programme 2017/18

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching for Members' information, the work programme for the Committee's work being undertaken for the 2017/18 municipal year.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Tye referred to the removal of the Youth Services topic which had previously been listed as an item for consideration at this meeting; and in particular the assets that had remained following the decommissioning of the XL Youth Villages. Ms Davison advised that the assets remained with the Council and had not transferred to Together for Children and Ms Robinson commented that a list of the remaining assets had been circulated to Members of the Committee in August, 2017.

Councillor Tye commented that at a previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee they had been advised that they would look to give first refusal of the use of any of the remaining assets to the voluntary and community sector network; if they had the capacity and were able to utilise them.

Ms. Burnham stated that she understood that the Scrutiny Committee had requested information from Officers which had then had been circulated to the wider distribution

of all Members rather than being submitted back to the Committee first for further discussion. Since this time, decisions on the future of the assets had been taken and Officers were in the process of carrying those out. If the information had been provided to the Committee in the first instance then this could have prevented any issue but she was not sure there was any merit in reconsidering the item.

Councillor Tye advised that he was aware of the decisions that had been made but commented that this fully undermined the role of the Scrutiny Committee when others had made those decisions on the recommendations of Officers.

In closing, Councillor Tye asked that the topic of Youth Services be put back into the work programme for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Bell requested that an item be considered for the work programme in relation to nursery provision for two year olds and the impact this had as he was aware that there was some excellent work being undertaken within nurseries in the city, although he had some concerns that there may not be the same level of provision being offered through the private sector. Mr. Marshall commented that the authority had a large number of maintained nursery schools offering the two year old provision and that there was a lot to celebrate which may not be getting shared. He suggested it may be beneficial to invite Nursery Head Teachers along to discuss these with them.

In closing, Mr. Marshall advised he had picked up on three areas which the Committee wished to cover in a future report, namely: the two year old offer and how successful it was, clarity around the provision that was on offer and the benefit of each of these; and the private sector provision; some of which was excellent.

6. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the information contained in the work programme be received and noted; and
- ii) the Scrutiny Officer include the topics of 'Youth Services' and the 'Two Year Old Nursery Provision in the City' into the work programme for the municipal year.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Head of Scrutiny and Area Arrangements submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from the 19th September, 2017.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the Notices of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

(Signed) B. FRANCIS,
Chairman.