

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY EDUCATION BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 2 October 2018 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Bill Brown, Juliet Campbell, Alex Feis-Bryce, Jim Mallory, John Muldoon and Luke Sorba

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Silvana Kelleher

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Liam Curran, Councillor Joan Millbank, Councillor Pauline Morrison, Councillor Susan Wise and Monsignor N Rotheron

5. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the open meeting held on 13 March 2018 be confirmed as an accurate record.

6. Declarations of Interests

None was declared.

7. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 20 September 2018

Local Government Social Care Ombudsman report

The Service Manager, Children in Need introduced the report. The Chair of Children and Young People (CYP) Select Committee, Councillor Sorba expressed his surprise that this problem had occurred. He said the CYP Select Committee had scrutinised this issue several times. He asked why it had occurred and what steps had been taken to prevent it happening in future, and what were the consequences faced by the Council because of the findings.

Officers told Panel Members that the Council has a robust transport policy that had been scrutinised at various meetings. It was noted that in assessing individuals officers look at people's capability to promote their independence, taking into account any risk involved.

Officers said the problem arose as a result of Section 508F of the Education Act which contradicts this policy. The Act states that any transport support required to access Education should be made available. Officers said a post assessment had been done, but the parent said the need to drop and pick up her son for his activities prevented her from addressing her own needs.

Officers said they now have to think about balancing the needs of the children and that of their carers to ensure compliance. Councillor Sorba commented that he recognised the challenges faced by officers, as the move to independence for the child could affect that of the carers. He asked whether this would lead to

reassessment of cases, and was told that cases had been looked at and none required transport to be paid for.

The Chair asked for and was assured no other resident was in a similar situation. He said he hoped lessons have been learnt from the findings, and future policy and practices would be drawn to reflect this.

Councillor Mallory asked if the findings would impact on the transport budget which he said everyone was aware is largely overspent. Officers said they would need to give consideration to Section 508F, and Education for post 19. They said they were aware of the overspend and would ensure this was properly managed going forward, with regular reviews and the development of cost saving schemes. Councillor Mallory said he would look at the general rise in transport costs in another forum.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Meeting ended 7:20pm

Chair