



Buckinghamshire Council

Children's & Education Select Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN'S & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 15 JUNE 2023 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 2.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

J Ward, S Adoh, K Bates, D Blamires, C Jones, S Kayani, S Lewin, Dr W Matthews, D Summers and T Wilson

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

R Stuchbury, K Dover, R Nash, E Albert and S Wilson

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that Councillors Clarke, Darby, Dormer, Osibogun and Turner had submitted their apologies for the meeting. Apologies were also received from Zoe Williams, co-optee.

Councillors Stuchbury and Wilson were also in attendance at the meeting.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman appointed Councillor Ade Osibogun as Vice-Chairman of the Select Committee for the ensuing year.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Cllr K Bates declared a personal interest as a school governor.
- Cllr D Blamires declared a personal interest as an employee of Bourne End Academy and as a parent of a child with SEND at a local authority school in Buckinghamshire.
- Cllr S Kayani personal interest as a Policy Advisor for the Dyspraxia Foundation and as an employee at Bourne End Academy.

4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the committee held on 23rd March 2023 and 17th May 2023 be AGREED as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

In relation to the addendum to the minutes Katie Dover noted that the responses to items 12 to 14 would be circulated to committee members this month.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions were received in relation to this agenda of the Select Committee. It was noted that Councillors Stuchbury and Wilson attended the meeting to ask questions under specific items.

6 CHILDREN'S SERVICES UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Children's and Education; Richard Nash, Service Director – Children's Social Care and Errol Albert, Service Director – Transformation and Improvement, to the meeting.

In their presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- The update report on the work of the Children's Services Department had been forwarded to Cabinet for consideration. A number of significant issues had been highlighted in the Cabinet report, including the issues relating to the substantial increase in demand levels nationally, the progress of the schools' white paper, the Care Review and the government's response to it. Demand levels and changes at the national level had a significant impact on how the service would meet the challenges of the future.
- Mr Nash commended Sandra Carnell and her team's excellent work for children's homes as two had received outstanding Ofsted ratings and the positive inspection outcome for the youth offending service. However, he recognised the need for ongoing improvement and highlighted the challenges in finding appropriate placements for children in need.

During the discussion, comments and questions raised by the Committee included:

- A Member asked if Buckinghamshire would receive any of the £27 million in funding for carer recruitment and retention. Mr Nash clarified that the mentioned figures were national and that the report was written before the specific division of funds among local authorities was known. They were currently awaiting further information on how the allocation will be distributed. Mr Nash acknowledged the importance of having clarity on the funds and stated that as more information becomes available, the Committee would be updated accordingly.
- Concerns about the clarity of paragraph 2.9 regarding social worker pay in the report were raised. They sought clarification on the specific roles and types of social workers being referred to, and questioned whether the conditions of service were determined at the local authority level or followed a national pay and terms structure. Mr Nash acknowledged the need for detailed answers and committed to providing a written response with the necessary information. He mentioned that efforts were made to ensure pay parity with other local authorities, aligning with prevailing pay rates for similar roles.

ACTION: RN

- A Member noted that the care review suggested abolishing the role of Child Protection Conference chair, which was not mentioned in the strategy. Mr Nash advised that there had been no proposals to change these roles, though there had been an ongoing debate regarding the role of independent reviewing officers for looked-after

children.

- It was noted that the county was falling behind in meeting the completion targets for the digitalisation of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs). Mr Nash acknowledged that the demand for EHCPs was increasing annually by approximately 16% and emphasised the need to consider digital solutions to improve performance. Potential barriers that certain parents and carers may face in accessing digital services were highlighted. Mr Nash agreed with these concerns and emphasised the importance of developing a strategy that ensures easy access to digitalisation for all individuals, acknowledging that some exceptions may be necessary to address the challenges associated with digitalisation. A written response concerning the specific details of this issue would be provided to the Committee.

ACTION: RN

- The upcoming kinship care strategy with £9 million in funding was discussed. Mr Nash highlighted the significance of kinship care and the local authority's commitment to supporting kinship carers. There was currently a lack of information on the government's timeframe, but Mr Nash expressed eagerness for guidance and potential additional funding from central government.

- A Member raised concerns about workforce stability in frontline teams, and asked about plans to improve it. They also inquired about the frequency of peer reviews. Mr Nash acknowledged the national shortage of social workers and the demanding nature of child protection work. He emphasised the importance of supporting social workers and creating the right conditions to perform their roles effectively, aligning with the ongoing transformation programme. He also explained that peer reviews are part of the sector-led improvements and are conducted annually. Additional processes, such as comprehensive quality assurance, were also in place to ensure the service was running effectively.

- A Member raised the issue of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's observations regarding academic selection testing measures and the higher levels of stress experienced by students. They asked if the Cabinet Member for Children's Services was aware of the observations and if Cabinet would formulate a response. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the importance of the suggestion and mentioned the ongoing work of the school improvement team in providing enhanced support to students. She also expressed willingness to investigate the matter further.

ACTION: AC

- In response to a Member's question regarding how the national co-production for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Week would be publicised, as well as the co-production charter mentioned in the local inspection report, Mr Nash noted that a written response would be provided to the Committee.

ACTION: RN

- It was noted that Buckinghamshire was not one of the 12 pilot areas for early intervention scheme funding.

- Several questions regarding funding and support for children with SEND were raised. Mr Nash explained that the distribution of the government's committed funding of £200 million and £30 million was yet to be confirmed. However, Buckinghamshire Council would receive £188,000 over two years to support the increase in leaving care allowances. The high needs block funding for Buckinghamshire Council had increased by 49% from 2019-2020 to 2023-2024, reaching £123.5 million. This increase had helped the council meet the growing demand for support in education, health, and care plans, as well as SEN support. However, the high needs budgets still faced pressure due to increased demand and complexity, and the council was carrying a deficit in its high needs

block. A written response would be provided to address the questions more comprehensively.

ACTION: RN

Councillor Stuchbury attended the committee to speak to his question which had been submitted with notice as follows:

*“**Paragraph 2.4** of the report details the six pillars for reform of the Government’s Implementation and Strategy Consultation and these are underpinned by £200 million of funding. The Care Review called for **£2.6 billion** support over 5 years. **Paragraph 2.24** also refers to the £200 million to support children – I am assuming this is national funding.*

***Paragraph 2.19** of the report states that **£30 million** will be spent of programmes supporting families of care leavers and children in care and **paragraph 2.20** notes the increase in grant for those leaving care from **£2000 to £3000**, and the bursary for those in apprenticeships will increase from **£1000 to £3000** – broadly in line with the care review recommendations.*

***Paragraph 2.24** states that the LGA analysis reports on an estimated **£1.6 billion** shortfall per year to maintain current service levels, and the care review recommended an additional **£2.6 billion** over 4 years prior to the impact of inflation. Despite increasing their budgets by over £700 million in the year 2020/2021, councils still overspent by £800 million that year.*

***Paragraph 2.38** states the government’s significant investment into children and young people with SEND and in AP, with investment increasing by more than 50% compared with 2019-20 - to over £10 billion by 2023-24.*

*Although we are grateful for the additional funding, given the substantial size of these figures it is **important** we understand what these figures mean, what percentage they represent in terms of Westminster’s decision and how they relate to our outcomes in Buckinghamshire. We need to know the methodology within the Buckinghamshire Education Plan for those with SEND whose parents face particularly difficult challenges in order to gain the support they need to meet their child’s specific needs.*

To summarise my question is:

(i) What does the £200 million commitment by the Government mean in financial terms and support to Buckinghamshire Council and the county’s children? and

(ii) what of the £30 million will be allocated for Buckinghamshire’s care leavers and children in care?

(iii) what will be the difference that the additional funding makes to meeting the needs of those with special educational needs in meeting the high demand for EHCP reports and to funding for children with challenges such as autism, dyspraxia and extrasensory conditions.

I hope this is received enthusiastically considering the importance of the subject to be discussed. and the shared journey, the local authority has been on since 2013 in respect to children services and education

The response to Councillor Stuchbury’s Question was as follows:

“Thank you for your question Cllr Stuchbury as this highlights the additional funding that will be made available to support improvements within children’s services across the country. In relation to your first and second question, whilst the government has announced an additional £200m and £30m commitment respectively, how that funding is to be distributed across different initiatives and individual local authorities has yet to be confirmed. However, Buckinghamshire will receive a total of £188k over two years (£94k per year) to support the increase in leaving care allowances from £2,000 to £3,000.

On your final question, the High Needs Block funding for Buckinghamshire Council has increased by 49% from 2019-20 to 2023-24, increasing from £82.7m in 2019-20 to £123.5m in 2023-24. The increase in funding has supported the council to meet the increase in demand for support for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans and pupils on SEND Support across all types of provision and type of need. High needs budgets remain under pressure due to increases in demand and complexity and the council is still carrying a deficit against its high needs block.”

7 CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Chairman invited Cllr Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Children’s and Education, Richard Nash, Service Director – Children’s Social Care and Errol Albert, Service Director – Transformation, to speak on this item.

In their presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- The transformation programme was prompted by a rise in demand for services, including higher referral rates compared to similar areas. Nationally, there was a 32% increase in child protection plans, and the number of children in care was projected to surpass 100,000 in the next decade.
- The council acknowledged the need to improve risk management and support for children with emerging needs, creating an environment conducive to effective social work by addressing caseloads and providing adequate support. Buckinghamshire Council’s Children’s Services have improved significantly and were striving to achieve a good rating from OFSTED.
- The comprehensive programme of change would be implemented to ensure that children and young people were at the centre of decision-making at every stage of the process, moving away from traditional practices. The proposed changes aimed to consider new demands and emerging risks, minimise the need for repetitive storytelling by families, provide continuity of support, and utilise local services effectively. Any changes requiring job transitions would involve formal consultation.
- A cultural workforce framework was being established to ensure consistency in values, expectations, and support provided to social workers. The goal was to recruit and retain social workers successfully by focusing on staff development and well-being.
- A triangle model was used to illustrate the focus on strengthening support at the early stage to prevent concerns from escalating. The narrow end represented statutory duties related to child protection and safeguarding, while the wider end represented the aim to reduce the need for intensive intervention. The middle part involved targeted intensive family help through multi-agency teams, including qualified social workers and family support workers. The goal was to identify and support families at an earlier stage by providing easily accessible services, which would reduce the need for intensive statutory interventions such as child protection plans, care proceedings, or removal from home.

- The transformation journey was already underway, with phase one focusing on early help pathways and preventing the escalation of needs. Services within the organisation and external partners were being assessed for their potential contributions. This included developing smaller, cohesive multi-agency teams that are attuned to local communities, including schools and voluntary community partners. This shift also allowed for the identification of a trusted lead professional who could develop relationships with families and ensure they receive the right services. Collaboration with partners was crucial to provide continuity of support. Phase two would involve wider services and their alignment with the model. Discussions and engagements were taking place with various boards and partners, and staff feedback and ideas were being gathered to shape the system and identify their roles in achieving the desired outcomes.
- Strategic commissioning was also a priority, especially in the challenging area of children's placements. Efforts were being made to recruit and support foster carers, strengthen the adoption offer, and prevent children and young people from entering care whenever possible.

During discussion, comments and questions raised by the Committee included:

- The Chairman commended the inclusion of social worker wellbeing in the programme, particularly in light of social work's sensitive and distressing nature.
- Concerns were raised about the increasing number of referrals nationally and within the county. Mr Nash explained that not all referrals are negative, as it was crucial to be informed of any changes in a child or young person's circumstances. The definition of re-referrals had changed, and process issues resulted in a false increase in recorded figures. Additionally, increased pressures on families in recent years contributed to some children and young people returning for support. Re-referrals could also arise if previous work had not been thorough enough. Mr Nash emphasised the importance of gaining a detailed understanding of re-referral figures in shaping future actions.
- A Member emphasized the need for flexibility in recruiting trusted lead professionals and suggested considering school staff, including safeguarding leads and trained members, for the role. Mr Albert agreed and stressed that the trusted lead professional role should not be limited to one person or role. He acknowledged the important role of schools in supporting children, young people, and families, emphasizing their established relationships. Additionally, he highlighted that everyone has a responsibility to support and safeguard children, and volunteers with lived experience and community connections can have a significant positive impact on families. Overall, flexibility and inclusivity in selecting trusted lead professionals were considered crucial.
- Concerns about potentially losing the positive outcomes achieved through the transformation of early health services in 2019 were raised. The stressful nature of previous staff consultations and the need to prioritise staff well-being were highlighted. Mr Albert explained that both the pandemic and the new challenges that children and young people faced necessitated innovative approaches. While commitments were made during the previous consultation, the focus now was on ensuring that services were appropriate for specific areas and building on the successful aspects of the previous work. Ongoing mapping and collaboration with colleagues in other parts of the organisation were part of the efforts to achieve this.
- A Member inquired about the planning process for the locality support teams, asking about the factors that would determine their locations and team sizes. Mr Albert acknowledged the need to align the transformation of the teams with information from other parts of the organisation, such as the Better Buckinghamshire Programme and the Opportunity Bucks Programme, as well as considerations of wards and their levels of deprivation. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that services were accessible

and tailored to local needs, which would be achieved through ongoing discussions with colleagues from various parts of the organisation. He noted the different challenges faced by families in various areas, highlighting the need to engage with the right individuals and develop local solutions that address the prevalent needs in each area.

- To provide an example of a positive outcome from the transformation programme, Mr Albert mentioned the availability of parenting classes and other parenting support resources that have made a positive difference, especially for families dealing with adolescent behaviours. He highlighted that these services, if accessed by families, can prevent the need for a referral to children's social care and the allocation of a social worker. Mr Albert emphasised the importance of building on such services and ensuring they were tailored to the specific needs of local areas as they move forward with the transformation.

- A Member inquired about the involvement of the voluntary sector in the early help partnership. Mr Albert acknowledged the significance of voluntary organisations in Buckinghamshire, noting that many of them are unknown but offer diverse services to children, young people, and adults. He emphasised the ongoing process of scoping and discovering these organisations' expertise through events, surveys, and individual meetings. The aim was to actively involve them in the transformation, seeking their input and exploring how their services can address family challenges effectively. The intention was not just to save money but to tap into the valuable expertise of the voluntary sector and ensure their meaningful participation in the initiative.

- The use of the term 'family' in the proposed operating model was questioned, as it could exclude certain individuals with diverse circumstances. Mr Albert acknowledged the importance of inclusivity and assured that changes to terminology could still be made. He emphasised the need to communicate the transformation in a way that includes everyone and promised to give further thought to the issue.

- It was suggested that a separate model for prevention be formulated in addition to the statutory model, highlighting a need for effective communication, actions, and cultural change among staff. Mr Albert explained that family issues were dynamic and required a system to support families throughout their circumstances. The aim was to create a system that combines qualified statutory roles with early help family support roles, providing consistent support and addressing issues comprehensively. The objective was to establish a one-stop-shop approach that manages family journeys effectively and reduces the need for repeated referrals.

- A Member suggested conducting case studies to showcase both good practices and challenges faced during the transformation process. Mr Albert explained that they were already working on case studies with staff, seeking their input and ideas. They highlighted the importance of recognising the expertise and skills of non-qualified social workers who often have valuable experience in working with families.

- The need for a unified approach to providing support services was highlighted, suggesting the need for further budget allocations within schools to address emerging needs prior to escalation. Mr Albert acknowledged the presence of existing resources, such as school link workers serving as family support workers, who successfully diverted referrals to the appropriate channels. The speaker mentioned ongoing discussions with school heads to explore and utilise available resources, emphasising the need for a support system to ensure the effectiveness of such interventions.

- A Member asked about the number of envisaged locality support teams and whether officers had visited successful teams in Hampshire and Hertfordshire to learn from their best practices. In response, Mr Albert acknowledged the importance of partnership, communication, and viewing the children's workforce as a cohesive group. He mentioned that his team had engaged in discussions with other areas, including Hertfordshire and Hampshire, to understand their successful approaches and improved outcomes. The goal

was to create a similar positive model in Buckinghamshire to enhance recruitment and retention of the workforce. Based on initial modelling and data analyses, there would possibly be 21 different locality teams, though consultation and engagement with stakeholders were needed to determine the final number. Based on the Committee's previous inquiry into social worker recruitment and retention, a locality-based model would have a positive impact on recruitment and retention, as social workers valued reduced travel times and stronger relationships with the families they work with.

Cllr Wilson attended the Committee to speak to his question, which had been submitted with notice as follows:

"The Children's Services Update presented to Cabinet in May 2023 has provided a vivid and transparent description of the challenges facing Children's Services. The Update notes in the risk section that there are significant financial pressures associated with a number of areas detailed within the report, particularly pertinent to the mandated transfer scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, demand pressures faced across the Service and the reliance on agency staff due to the significant social worker recruitment challenges.

It outlines a Transformation Programme that it deems fundamental to improve service practices and progress beyond the 'requires improvement to be good' Ofsted judgment. It also believes the Programme is critical to securing a permanent and stable workforce. This will involve moving to a locality-based model of delivery to rebalance workforce skills and knowledge from appropriately qualified practitioners to provide the appropriate support for children and young people.

In paragraph 3.9 of the Update report, it briefly states that the locality-based model will also support the service to address the financial pressures and to deliver services within this financial envelope of the medium-term financial plan (MTFP).

In order to meet the Council's statutory duties, there was a clear need to substantially increase spending on Children's Services in 22-23 due to the well-documented demand and cost pressures. Full year numbers have yet to be reported, but 22-23 will close at £5m over Budget. The ongoing pressures taken into the 23-24 Budget outline a further increase of £13.3m versus the original Council Budget/MTFP. The Budget for 23-24 was for one year only, so there is no updated MTFP for 24-25 and beyond, other than that published in 21-22 which would now appear to be considerably outdated given the substantial rise in demand and complexity, as well as staffing costs.

What are the detailed financial projections for the Transformation Plan in Children's Services by year and cost centre that demonstrate how the Service will address the financial pressures and deliver services within this financial envelope of the MTFP, ensuring that the locality-based model can meet all its statutory service requirements, improve service practice, secure a Good or better Ofsted rating and secure a permanent and stable workforce? How will these substantial cumulative savings be delivered over and above all existing saving programmes assumed in the Better Buckinghamshire and subsequent reviews?

The Director's responded as follows to Councillor Wilson's questions:

There is corporate and political recognition that we must work differently in order to realise our shared ambition to deliver good quality services to children. The service has refined throughout its improvement journey a comprehensive self-assessment from which a whole system Children's Services Transformation Programme has been developed. A significant part of the

Transformation Programme aims to:

- ensure children and families are supported at the earliest possible stage through effective partnership interventions that improve outcomes without the need for escalation to more intrusive statutory support.
- reduce hand off points and minimise assessments for families and enable the system to respond to changing risks by developing a new model be based on multi-disciplinary locality-based working that is closer to the communities, boosting the contribution of partners.
-

Savings targets (as detailed below) associated with the transformation relate to the reduction of additional agency staff who have been employed to support the service in meeting additional demand post pandemic. The move to a locality-based model will (a) mean the service is better placed to manage demand as the whole system will enable children to receive a more consistent, purposeful and child centred approach wherever they are on their journey of need from early help through to being in care, and (b) support the service to address the financial pressures relating to staffing and to deliver services within the staffing financial envelope of the medium-term financial plan.

Description	Sum of Savings 2023-24	Sum of Savings 2024-25	Sum of Savings 2025-26
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Reduce requirement for additional staffing through development of a locality-based model.	-332	-2,331	-2,883

In addition to the delivery of the above, there are additional savings targets attached to the Strategic Commissioning workstream of the transformation programme. Since October 2021, it has become increasingly difficult to find placements, particularly for children aged 12 plus with complex needs. As a result, a revised Placement Sufficiency Strategy has been developed that accurately reflects the current position and clearly articulates the service's plans to increase the availability of provision for our children and young people that meet their needs and provides them with a safe place to live and thrive within Buckinghamshire. Savings associated with this workstream (as set out below) relate to delivering the actions set out in this strategy which will in turn reduce the number of high-cost placements for children looked after. Full business cases for the £1,325m saving relating to the increase in the availability of inhouse placements still need to be developed and agreed through the Service Improvement Board (Better Buckinghamshire Programme). Due to the national challenges in placement sufficiency and the impact on placement availability and unit cost, our placement budgets continue to be at risk in the current financial year and across the MTFP.

	Budgeted Savings 23/24	Future Savings	Total
Description of change	£'000	£'000	£'000
Creation of an Edge of Care Team that will work intensively with adolescents and their parents/care givers to negate the need for them to come into care.	390	390	780

The development of an inhouse Parent & Child Provision	620	300	920
Increase in the availability of inhouse placements	0	1,325	1,325
Total	1,010	2,015	3,025

- Mr Nash noted that the overall aim of the transformation programme was to support children and families at an early stage, reduce assessments and handoff points, and implement a multidisciplinary locality-based working model. The savings targets involved reducing reliance on agency staff and strategic commissioning efforts to improve placement sufficiency. He also acknowledged the challenges in finding suitable placements for older children with complex needs and the associated budget risks. Mr Nash assured that a more comprehensive written response with financial tables would be provided to address the specific financial projections requested.

ACTION: RN

The Chairman thanked the presenters for their attendance and participation.

8 REVIEW GROUP REPORT ON PATHWAYS FOR CHILDREN WITH SEND

Councillor Blamires, Chair of the SEND task and finish review group, provided the following update about its progress:

- The inquiry focused on improving the experience for parents of children with autism, ADHD, anxiety or depression awaiting diagnosis when accessing pathways to services for SEND. Surveys had shown that over 90% of parents suspecting their child might have one or more of these conditions were correct, emphasising the need to offer substantial support from the outset and easy access to key information.
- Several recommendations were made to improve access to pathways to SEND services which had arisen through the extensive interviewing of relevant key officers, staff of the authority and parents.
- One recommendation was made to provide additional training for teaching and nursery staff to validate parents' concerns. Failure to offer timely support may result in the escalation of needs and increased costs for children's services. The need for more educational psychologists, including trainee positions, was also raised, as their input could be valuable even before a formal diagnosis was made.
- Issues were raised regarding the accessibility and effectiveness of the section of the council's website called the 'local offer', which was for the provision of SEND information. Many parents reported difficulties navigating the website and suggested improvements such as short videos in simple language and clear signposting. The term 'local offer' used nationally by the government for local SEND provision appeared to be not adequately understood.
- Additionally, schools reported positive experiences when children or returning students with ADHD and autism spoke openly about their conditions, helping to reduce bullying and stigma while increasing understanding among their peers. Schools also highlighted the importance of showcasing successful individuals with ADHD and autism as role models, providing inspiration and boosting confidence for students facing similar challenges.

During the discussion, comments and questions raised by the Committee included:

- Attendees commended the work of the inquiry group on the report.
- A Member asked if there were one or two key issues that could be focused on to make a difference, considering the overwhelming number of issues discussed. Cllr Blamires highlighted the lack of information as a recurring problem. Many parents, especially those new to the system, struggled to find the right information and resources. The overall aim should be to simplify and streamline the process of accessing relevant information, creating clear and accessible pathways for parents and professionals.
- A Member noted that progress had been made in the early pathway communication, particularly with the implementation of written statements of action. Initiatives like the AET (Autism Education Trust) programme could be expanded to include other conditions, providing quick and effective interventions at the beginning of the diagnostic pathway.
- Although not formally recommended, the value of parent-led organisations was acknowledged, with several individuals highlighting the significant support they offer. It was proposed that the council promote the formation of local parent groups during their interactions with specific organisations, as parents involved in such groups found them highly beneficial.
- A Member suggested considering an alternative name for the 'local offer', mentioning the possibility of including the term 'SEND' in the name to ensure its relevance for concerned parents who may search for related information online. Mr Nash explained that the term 'local offer' was mandated by the Children and Families Act 2014, which posed a challenge in finding an alternative term.
- The crucial role of school staff in daily interactions with children was highlighted, emphasising the need to enhance their skills in understanding and addressing the challenges faced by children with SEND.
- Recommendation 8, which focused on training more educational psychologists, was considered particularly significant. The role educational psychologists played in providing expert advice, guidance, leadership, and input, complementing the work of practitioners in schools and colleges, was highlighted.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Blamires and Members of the inquiry group for their work on the report, which would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting in September.

9 WORK PROGRAMME

The Select committee received the draft work programme. Members were advised to contact the Scrutiny Officer for the committee with any additional topics they wished to be include.

The following suggestion was raised during the meeting:

- It was requested that the principal social worker annual report, scheduled for the 7th of September meeting, include quantitative data alongside qualitative data. It was also suggested to include key performance indicators (KPIs) in the report to gauge the extent of success and provide guidance on the current status. Having qualitative and quantitative data would offer a more nuanced view and prevent misinterpretation of the information.
- A Member suggested exploring alternative provision (AP) in more depth, possibly in conjunction with the ongoing transformation project. They highlighted the potential risk

of students returning to mainstream settings without experiencing positive developments, which could potentially contribute to long-term consequences like permanent exclusion. They proposed conducting a detailed examination of the AP landscape in the county and its potential impact on other services.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Select Committee will be Thursday, 7th September 2023. However, the start time has been changed to 10 a.m.