

## UPDATE REPORTS FROM CHAIRMEN OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

### **Update from Pauline Helliar-Symons, Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

"The Committee heard about the problems in budget setting as a result of an increase in pupil numbers. Government money will come through eventually, but not until later, whereas schools have to start spending money for a September intake several months before (interviewing for staff, buying text books etc); this leaves the department with a shortfall - and the Heads want the money now. Various strategies were discussed, among them a request to Graham Ebers to attend our next Scrutiny meeting to talk to us about possible solutions, including possibly borrowing the money needed in the short term.

Good progress was reported in the annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board, as has been the case now for the last two or three years; foster carers are more engaged and more is being done for care leavers. The report was also laid out in a much more structured way than before, showing achievements, and what children are worried about for example. The committee was reminded of the Looked After Children's Celebration day from lunchtime on October 30th - all councillors are eligible to come and are urged to do so, to lend these children their support.

Performance monitoring - Early years is improving, although boys' writing is the weakest area; we have done well - better than last year - in key stage 1; less well at GCSE although there are some excellent results from individual schools: discussions have started on things that need to be addressed. A levels have gone up against the national trend. Verified results will come to the next meeting, and members asked for Edgebarrow and Yateley Schools to be included since many of WBC children go to these schools, while recognising that we are not accountable for their results.

A good report was received on the Virtual School for Looked After Children - the first report of this kind that we have received, since the virtual school has only recently been re-launched.

Officers were asked that in future agendas, the committee be asked for suggestions and comments in the Recommendations section, rather than just to 'note the report'."

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