

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 8 JANUARY 2024 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.00 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Andrew Mickleburgh (Chair), Ian Pittock, Anne Chadwick, Graham Howe, Phil Cunnington, Chris Johnson and Andrew Gray

**Other Councillors Present**

Councillors: Prue Bray (Executive Member for Children's Services), Stephen Conway (Leader of the Council) and Jackie Rance

**Diocesan Representatives**

Richard Lamey, Church of England representative

**Officers Present**

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist  
Sudeshna Banerjee, Service Manager Intelligence and Impact  
Gillian Cole, Service Manager Schools  
Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help  
Mark Douglas, Quality Assurance Consultant  
Frances Haywood, Head of Strategic Housing  
Helen Watson, Interim Director of Children's Services  
Ming Zhang, Assistant Director for Education and SEND

**55. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Jane Ainslie and Sarah Clarke. Councillor Ainslie was substituted by Councillor Chris Johnson.

**56. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 November 2023 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the amendment below, and signed by the Chair.

Correction: that on page 7, where it read '*6 November 2023*', this be changed to 6 September 2023.

**57. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**58. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited members of the public to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

**59. AMIT MEHTA ASKED THE CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:**

One of the Safety Valve workstream is listed below:

EOTAS Dedicated focus project on alternatives to EOTAS after two terms and clear intervention and support via AP to reduce long term EOTAS packages and cost.

I have looked through Safety valve agreement and there is no mention of EOTAS, which suggests above workstream is LA initiated, can I please ask why LA believe stopping short a provision which is working for a child is beneficial for child's learning?

Has LA completed any impact analysis which gives them the confidence around impact on child's learning will most likely be a positive one.

### **Answer**

Whilst the AP & EOTAS review project is not recorded in Wokingham's Safety Valve Agreement published by the DfE, the project has always been part of the Deficit Management Plan and the wider programme of activities designed to deliver a high quality and sustainable SEND System for the area.

We are an inclusive authority and our starting point is that for the vast majority of Children & Young People being in school / college provides the best outcomes (as evidence supports) and many of the parents of children with an EOTAS package have told us that earlier opportunities to support their child were missed and that they have ended up with an EOTAS package as a last resort, not a desired outcome.

Therefore, our intention through the AP and EOTAS review is to ensure that early intervention through a range of measures should be focused on reintegrating young people into school and that this will thereby minimise the numbers ending up with an EOTAS package. This is not focused on ceasing existing packages but is expected to have the result of reducing the frequency with which these are required going forward.

We would not plan to stop commissioning a provision which is beneficial for a child's learning but if more appropriate options for young people on EOTAS packages are identified, then we will seek, in dialogue with families, to reintegrate these young people back into education settings. Assessment of need and decisions regarding the most suitable provision would be carried out as part of the annual review cycle in terms of individual cases.

I hope you would agree that any EOTAS package should be regularly reviewed, to check whether it is benefiting the child for whom it is provided.

### **Supplementary question:**

This is a rather lengthy reply, but I think I will try. One of the things in the reply you mentioned to support early intervention with a range of measures and to look and use opportunities which exist now with regards to alternative provisioning. So is there a list of alternative provisioning providers which the SEND Team are looking to provision as part of early intervention, and I guess some detail around those providers would definitely assist in trying to understand, I guess the medium to long term vision of the SEND Team is proposing to through these measures.

### **Supplementary answer:**

The Chairman asked Officers to assist in answering the supplementary question.

Ming Zhang, Assistant Director for Education and SEND stated that this was work in progress, there was a list of APs (Alternative Providers) which both local authorities and schools used. They were being quality assured at the moment.

The Chairman asked Amit Mehta to continue the dialogue and engagement with WBC. There was a desire to improve and achieve the best outcomes for children in the borough.

## **60. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

## **61. YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Committee was informed that the Youth Council had not been able to attend the meeting due to other commitments.

Members were advised that the Youth Council had invited members of the CSO&S Committee to attend one of their meetings, as an alternative to their attendance to CSO&S. Members were asked to consider this option and there was general willingness to attend a Youth Council meeting.

Helen Watson, Interim Director for Children's Services informed that the election of the Youth MP was due to take place on 23 January 2024. In response to a comment, she clarified that this was a private process.

**RESOLVED** That Members of the CSO&S Committee were willing to attend a meeting of the Youth Council, and this would be communicated to the Youth Council via Officers.

## **62. SAFETY VALVE UPDATE**

Jonathan Wilding, Safety Valve / SEND Consultant shared a presentation containing the update on the Safety Valve project. Some of the points highlighted are listed below:

- WBC was now nine months into the Safety Valve programme and significant development had been achieved so far;
- A monitoring report had been submitted to the DfE in December 2023. The slides contained details of the development in:
  - Early Intervention and demand management
  - Sufficiency and new provision
  - Commissioning and quality assurance
- The fees for independent sector providers were kept at below inflation increases;
- Work was being undertaken with Health and Social Care to ensure that the funding for services was being provided in partnership (historically Education had provided the majority of the funding for services);
- Data analysis was much improved;
- Schools Forum had agreed to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block;
- The early intervention measures aimed, where appropriate, to reduce the need to 'jump' straight into applying for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
- There was an almost 50-50 split between schools and parents' requests for EHCPs. The level of parental requests in Wokingham was slightly higher than other comparable local authorities. Work was being undertaken to understand the reasons behind this trend. It was believed that earlier intervention would help to improve this situation;

- The informal feedback prior to the submission of the monitoring report to the DfE had been positive. The formal feedback had not yet been received;
- The project was on track to achieve a balanced Budget by 2028/29;
- 94 EHCPs had been successfully ceased for 2023, which was above the target;
- 51% of those with an EHCP were now being supported in a mainstream education settings;
- The total number of children with an EHCP was now in line with the projected/target figure in the Safety Valve programme;
- The identified risks included:
  - New Special Free Schools – The DfE was still to respond to WBC’s request to lead the capital development of the two new special schools. It was believed that WBC was best placed to lead on the capital programme in order to mitigate any pressures and avoid delays;
  - Increased parent resistance - some of the recent changes were resulting in increased parental challenges. There was an increase in the number of SEND tribunals and mediations;
  - Joint commissioning with Health – the tri-partite funding for complex cases was being reviewed to ensure that all partners are contributing appropriately (Health and Social Care). It was also important to support Health colleagues to address the barriers to achieve timescales;
- SEND Strategy – the initial draft was released for feedback early December. Health colleagues have since requested more opportunities to input into the strategy, this was being arranged with three workshops in the first quarter of 2024. It was anticipated that the final draft would be presented to the Executive for approval on 30 May 2024.

During the discussion of the item the following questions and comments were made:

- Councillor Chadwick asked if the reason behind the parental challenges was the fact that some EHCPs were being ceased or not being awarded?
- Jonathan Wilding explained that when young people were moving out of education it made sense to cease their EHCP. Parents could rightly feel anxious and concerned if there was not a clear pathway into adulthood. Therefore, there was work being undertaken with colleagues in Adult Services and Health to ensure that there was a clear transition plan;
- With regards to EHCPs not being awarded, much work was being undertaken to support schools and SENCOs to ensure that needs were met early, without the need to immediately escalate to an EHCP. Two terms of early interventions should be allowed to ascertain that those interventions were being effective. The process for obtaining an EHCP was being more rigorous, with better early intervention being put in place;
- In response to a question Jonathan Wilding explained that over 90% of EHCPs only ceased when a child finished education. However, it was possible to cease an EHCP if the child’s needs stabilised and no longer required a plan;
- Councillor Howe wondered if there was a correlation in the fact that Health colleagues had asked for greater involvement in the strategy and the fact that Health was being asked to increase their financial contribution?
- Members were informed that Health wished to have more opportunity to have an input in shaping the strategy. It was agreed that it was beneficial to work together, and it was important to help Health colleagues to address challenges, for example the delays in the speech and language therapy. Both the Council and Health faced financial

pressures, and there was a desire to make the resources available were used effectively;

- Other areas of focus with Health were:
  - Autistic diagnostic pathway - at the moment the wait list was very long and to address this issue it was important to ensure that there was early intervention in place to support the child before a diagnosis was established – this was called ‘waiting well’ (offering support and provision whilst waiting for a diagnosis)
  - Mental health – there was a dramatic increase demand and CAMHS was overwhelmed. There was a gap between preventative services and the CAMHS offer – more joint support from Health, Education and Social Services at an early stage was needed to address this challenge;
- Councillor Cunnington asked if there was any support available for parents to help address the children’s needs. Jonathan Wilding explained that this was a grey area, it was uncertain how much of the Education budget should be spent on home support, even though it was accepted that family support was beneficial. Wokingham had a good local offer for Early Help, which could be utilised;
- Councillor Bray, Executive Member for Children’s Services stated that it was important to look at children holistically. The Wokingham Borough Education Partnership Board had been considering how to better use data from different service areas to get a better understanding of the family situation. This was progressing, but there was still some work to do to join up the data;
- Richard Lamey asked about the numbers in relation to tribunals, there was mention of the fact that 98% of tribunal cases were found in favour of the parent, but it was not clear how many cases this related to? Also, what lessons were being learnt from tribunal cases?
- Jonathan Wilding informed that the 98% figure was a national statistic. Locally there were around 30-35 cases in progress. Every effort was being made to avoid tribunals and resolve issues earlier, through mediation meetings;
- The local authority was paying close attention to the findings of tribunals. Although most tribunals found in favour of parents, some decisions were perverse and against professionals’ advice, this was a complex landscape;
- Members considered the possibility of receiving more information with numbers/statistics and an anonymised example of a tribunal case, however there was no consensus if this would be helpful. It was agreed that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Executive Member and senior officers would discuss this outside of the meeting and make a recommendation;
- Jonathan Wilding pointed out that his comments regarding tribunals were his own views as an external advisor/ consultant;
- Councillor Bray stated that there was a general resistance to change from parents, they perceived change negatively because for many years they had had to fight the system to obtain the support needed for their children. It was important to work with parents to achieve the best outcomes for their children and consequently avoid the need for tribunals;
- Councillor Bray made reference to cases in other local authorities where tribunals made decisions which had significantly negatively impacted their budget. It was important to avoid those situations by trying to resolve matters without the need for a tribunal;
- Councillor Gray asked for assurances that the reduction in the number of EHCPs were in the best interest of the children, and how were SENCOs at schools viewing this change?

- Jonathan Wilding stated that SENCOs understood the need for early intervention and that this may avoid the need for escalation to an EHCP. In the past SENCOs had applied for assessments even when a child's need may not be high enough to need an EHCP, but there had been limited or non-existing support for low level needs and they only way to access support would have been through and EHCP. The local authority was now addressing these issues and looking fill any gaps in the early support offer;
- Jonathan Wilding explained that there was no desire to cut down on the number of EHCPs, just to manage the system better, and by offering early support, it was believed that better outcomes could be achieved, both in terms of the children's outcomes and financially for the local authority;
- The Chairman asked, in view of the fact that now 51% with EHCPs were being supported in mainstream settings, if schools were able to cope and were receiving the necessary support? Was there any feedback from schools?
- Ming Zhang, Assistant Director for Education and SEND stated that it was important to ensure the quality of decision making in order to secure the right placements. He added that the number of tribunals were relatively low, and efforts would continue to be made to avoid tribunals and find a solution earlier at mediation meetings;
- Ming Zhang stated that overall schools felt well supported, and the local authority was putting in place a lot of measures to support schools;
- Councillor Bray stated that it was positive that Schools Forum had agreed to transfer 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, his represented a change to their previous position. This money would be used to support schools. An outreach service for schools was being developed, and staff had already been appointed to start working on providing this service to schools.

Members thanked Jonathan Wilding for his work and noted that the SEND Strategy would be presented at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) The Safety Valve Update report be noted; and
- 2) The Chairman, Vice-chairman and Senior Officers would discuss the possibility of including more data and statistics around tribunals in future reports.

### **63. YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOUSING STRATEGY**

Councillor Conway, Leader of the Council and Samuel Watt, Senior Strategic Officer presented Young People's Housing Strategy.

Councillor Conway commended the report and the work that had been undertaken to put it together. The Executive was looking to work together with Members of the CSO&S Committee and would like to take into account their views prior to its final submission to Executive.

It was agreed that Wokingham had a lack of affordable housing, despite the increase in the amount of house building. Wokingham was an area that attracted a lot of people and demand for housing outstripped demand. It was believed that the need for affordable housing was now half of the total need for housing, and young people were particularly affected by this need.

The Young People's Housing Strategy aimed to address the housing needs of the most vulnerable young people in society, such as care leavers, unaccompanied asylum seekers

and those 16-17 young people at risk of homelessness. The Council had a corporate responsibility to care leavers as corporate parents.

Sam Watt informed that the Council did have a previous strategy that had run from 2014 to 2019 which had produced good results. However, things had changed both nationally and internationally which impacted housing, and it was appropriate to set out a new strategy.

There were challenges in relation to high rents and tenancy sustainability for care leavers. There was a shortage within the private rental sector, with limited options in Wokingham, all set within the context of increasing numbers of unaccompanied asylum seekers care leavers.

The strategy identified four priorities and was to run from 2024 to 2028. It will sit under the Affordable Housing Strategy and alongside other strategies such as the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Older People's Housing Strategy. There had been internal consultation with other areas within the Council, the strategy was being co-produced in partnership with stakeholders.

The priorities aimed to increase the quantity and quality of housing options:

1. Increasing the Council's housing options
2. Developing clear housing pathways
3. Supporting tenancy sustainment
4. Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping

The internal consultation was nearing completion and public consultation would begin in the next couple of weeks and would finish at the end of February. Accessibility options were being considered and young people were being consulted as part of the process.

During the discussion of the item the following questions and comments were made:

- Councillor Chadwick asked how information would be communicated with families? Samuel Watt explained that the objective was to signpost families to offers of support for early intervention (not just from the Council) in order to help young people to stay at home and avoid homelessness;
- Councillor Chadwick asked how the Council proposed to monitor and help young people living in private accommodation? Samuel Watt explained that the strategy was targeting young people who were likely to be known to the Council through the Rent Guarantee Scheme;
- Councillor Gray asked for more information around the Council's housing responsibilities to its Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who were placed outside of the borough, potentially in more expensive areas such as London;
- Samuel Watt informed that the Council did have a responsibility to house UASC under its care who lived outside of the borough. In such cases, consideration was taken to ascertain where they were placed. Sometimes, due to cultural and local community connections it was preferable to find accommodation in other areas. However, consideration was also taken about the possibility of bringing them to Wokingham, it was important to increase local provision;
- Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help added that care leavers tended to be accommodated in the area where they were placed as children. Therefore, developing more placements locally was desirable;
- Councillor Bray informed that she had attended the National Conference for Adults and Children in November. It was interesting to hear that some local authorities had received feedback from the children that they had acquired through the national

transfer scheme for UASC, that they would prefer to be placed within the community of their home local authority;

- Councillor Gray asked for more information about the setting up home grant. Adam Davis informed that this grant was for care leavers and the amount given depended on the type of accommodation a young person was moving in to and what was needed in terms of furniture etc. This was worked out with the personal assistants and was part of the care leavers offer;
- Councillor Howe pointed out that there was a large number of young people who had been educated in the borough, gone to university outside of the borough but who also struggled to find affordable housing in Wokingham. Many young people were now opting to go to a more local university. He suggested consideration of a scheme to attract young talent to the borough through the Young People's Housing Strategy;
- Councillor Conway acknowledged the situation alluded to, and informed that work was being undertaken with Reading University already. The eligibility criteria placed a great deal of importance on young people with a local connection, but consideration was being made into how to make an exception for key workers housing who may be from outside of the area. This strategic focused on vulnerable young people, other young people were considered under the wider Affordable Housing Strategy;
- Members felt that the title of the strategy did not accurately reflect the cohort it was aimed at and asked that it be reconsidered;
- Councillor Conway informed that this point had been considered but a clearer title had not been found;
- Councillor Johnson stated that when young people left the armed forces, the only place they could apply legally for housing was the place where they were attested (recruited). With the loss of the Arborfield garrison area, there could potentially be a lot of young people affected by this issue with no support available to them. He wondered if there was any consideration about this group of young people?
- Councillor Conway agreed to reflect on the issue mentioned above and try to find ways to help this group of young people;
- Councillor Pittock was of the opinion that the law which limited young people who left the armed forces from applying for housing assistance in the place where they were attested needed changing;
- Councillor Conway confirmed that the Housing Advisory and Implementation Group (HAIG) was a cross party group who met regularly and worked effectively, they had already reviewed this strategy;
- The Chairman asked for information about the Young Person's Housing Panel. Samuel Watt informed that this group had been set up following a review by a consultant a couple of years ago. It was created in an effort to improve co-production between Housing Services and Children's Services;
- Councillor Bray informed that as a result of the work of the Young Person's Housing Panel, there had been a reduction in the number of young people going into temporary accommodation of 71%, in the period since April 2023;
- Adam Davis reiterated the fact that it was important to work together with Housing colleagues to achieve the best outcomes for young people.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Consideration be given to ways in which to support young ex- service young people living in the borough in the Affordable Housing Strategy;
- 2) Consideration be given to finding a clearer title for the strategy; and



3) Officers and all those involved in the production of the strategy be thanked for their work.

#### **64. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Sudeshna Banerjee, Service Manager Intelligence and Impact presented the Key Performance Indicators report.

Councillor Pittock felt that the arrows on the right side of the tables did not make the performance and direction of travel clear, he believed that a RAG system would make the report clearer.

It was explained to Members that some indicators were not 'positive or 'negative' they were just a measure of data. Sudeshna Banerjee suggested adding a column saying 'better' or 'worse' where applicable.

Mark Douglas, Quality Assurance Consultant stated that all indicators were important and he would discuss ways to best present the report with Sudeshna Banerjee outside of the meeting. Even where there was no measure of better or worse in terms of performance, it was important that Members be informed of the level of demand for services.

Additionally, Members noted that some indicators included total numbers at the top, others only included percentages. Therefore, it could be difficult to understand performance. Officers agreed to look into ways to present the data in a more meaningful way.

Members looked at each dashboard in the report and the following questions and comments were made:

##### Dashboard Item 1 – Funded Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

Members asked what could be done to improve the figures in relation to EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of referral?

Sudeshna Banerjee explained that 80-85% completion was above the national average. Ming Zhang added that much work had been undertaken to achieve 80-85% completion rates, work was now under way to continue performing at this high level. To achieve this, it important to understand the key performance drivers, such as staff shortage and to monitor it closely.

##### Dashboard Item 3 – Children's Social Care Front Door

Were there any particular pinch points that were inhibiting performance of the timeliness of assessments?

Adam Davis explained that much work had been undertaken to improve the timeliness of assessments, and last month 97.8% of assessments were completed within the timescales. Much better timescales were being achieved in this quarter.

Helen Watson added that this was a significant indicator which was reported corporately at a senior level. It was important to keep the performance at around 90%.

##### Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

Do we know if those care leavers who are not in touch are more likely to be Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) or in unsuitable accommodation?

Sudeshna Banerjee stated that most of those care leavers who were not in touch were in independent accommodation.

Adam Davis explained that it was a very different situation for every young person. Some young people were missing (one or two) and some did not want to continue receiving support from the local authority. The local authority would make a decision as to whether to close the case after the age of 21 for those that did not want to continue to have support.

#### Dashboard Item 7 – Children Missing from Home/ Care

Nationally, 20% of children were not attending school, what was the situation in Wokingham?

Sudeshna Banerjee stated that school attendance in Wokingham was much better than the national average. This included figures from maintained schools, free schools and academies.

#### Dashboard Item 8 – Children’s Services Workforce

Sudeshna Banerjee informed that the quarter 2 figure was 13.33% and there had been an amendment to the quarter 1 figure – it was actually 10.53% (12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers).

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Officers would discuss ways to improve the presentation of the Key Performance Indicators to make it clearer for Members; and
- 2) The report be noted.

### **65. EDUCATION UPDATE**

Gillian Cole, Schools Service Manager presented the Education update.

The report highlighted a number of Ofsted inspections which had taken place in the last six months. The results and links to Ofsted reports were displayed in the agenda report. Of particular interest was the ‘Outstanding’ result awarded to Chiltern Way School, this was a very good result.

Members were informed that a new Chief Inspector of schools had taken post this month. Inspections were currently paused until 22 January whilst all inspectors underwent mental health and wellbeing training.

More information about the work around inclusion would be provided once the Southampton University project was completed.

The report contained information about the work being undertaken around supporting the multi-race ethnicity which was increasing in the borough.

The report contained information about the work being undertaken with the Wokingham Schools Hub. Members were encouraged to browse the website. The website was aimed at educational professionals and required a login, but Members may be interested to overview the headlines.

Members were very pleased to see the positive Ofsted results achieved by schools.

In response to a question, Gillian Cole explained that the Wokingham Schools Hub was not new, but it had recently been reviewed and modernised.

Councillor Bray informed that she had contacted Chiltern Way School to congratulate them on their achievement.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

## **66. REVIEW THE POST OFSTED IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Helen Watson presented the Review of the Post Ofsted Improvement Plan report.

Following the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection in March 2023, the local authority was required to produce an improvement plan. The first iteration of the plan was submitted to CSOS Committee in September 2023.

The lead Ofsted inspector met with officers in October, and the plan being presented had been reviewed and improved as a result of that conversation with the lead inspector. The current plan included more consideration of impact.

The Improvement Plan Board met monthly and there was a clear focus on the delivery of improvement.

Councillor Pittock asked about the progress of the recruitment of the new Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Manager. Adam Davis informed that recruitment had been successful, however this person would not be able to start for a few months.

Councillor Pittock asked for an update on the development and implementation of the Care Leaver Policy (paragraph 7.3). Adam Davis agreed to investigate and report back to Members.

Councillor Gray asked if there were or would be any other follow up reviews with the lead Ofsted inspector to ensure that the local authority was on the right path to achieve a good result at the next inspection? Helen Watson stated that another inspection could happen any time now. It was anticipated that an inspection would take place before March, possibly a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI). However, there would not be another opportunity to meet with Ofsted prior to an inspection.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

## **67. EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE**

Councillor Bray stated that most topics had already been discussed. She informed that the local authority had purchased three new properties to become children's homes. There process of recruiting a care manager, other members of staff and registering the homes was ongoing. It was hoped that they would be operational by the beginning of the next financial year.

A care leavers Christmas lunch took place on 22 December 2023, and this event had been very successful.

Much work was being undertaken in relation to school place planning. It was anticipated that sufficient school places would be available by the national offer day.

Councillor Chadwick stated that she had been advised that there was some doubt that the Forest School would receive the £600k they had been promised to help them become co-educational. She asked for more information about this issue.

Councillor Bray explained that the school had been asked to prioritise and work with the property team within the Council. She confirmed that an amount of money had been put aside to aid the school to do things like building girls changing rooms and toilets.

Ming Zhang added that negotiations were ongoing with the trustees and the headteacher about how to use the £600k which had been put aside for the school's conversion to become a co-educational school.

In response to a question about a leaking roof at the Forest School, Councillor Bray explained that academy schools were responsible for their own building maintenance.

**RESOLVED** That the Executive Member update be noted.

#### **68. FORWARD PLAN**

The next meeting of the Committee would be on 20 March 2024.

Members would consider whether to have the Youth Council attend the next meeting or to take up the offer to attend one of their meetings.

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist informed that the dates of meetings for the next municipal year were due to be agreed at the next meeting of Council on 18 January 2024. The Forward Plan would be populated once the dates were confirmed.

**RESOLVED** That the Forward Plan report be noted.

#### **69. ACTION TRACKER**

The Chairman asked for an update on the action in relation to SEND Voices meeting with the School Transport Team to discuss ideas for improvement in communication with drivers/escorts and families.

Councillor Bray informed that the government had not yet confirmed if the funding for holiday activities and food programme would continue. The Council relied on government funding for these activities, and it would not be able to continue the offer without the government grant. The Council was lobbying the government to continue with this funding.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

#### **70. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for item 70, on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Act.

#### **71. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN**

This item was considered in a Part 2 session.

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