

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 2 NOVEMBER 2021**

ENGAGEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

MINUTE EXTRACT

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which presented the draft Strategic Plan for the period 2022-26. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

A twelve week public consultation had commenced on 1 November and this included an opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny Committees and key Partnership Boards to comment on the Plan. Findings from the consultation would be used to inform development of the final Plan. A report would be presented to the Scrutiny Commission in March 2022, followed by a report to the Cabinet presenting the outcome of the consultation and seeking agreement for the revised draft Plan to be submitted to the County Council for approval in May 2022.

The strategic outcomes in the Plan were intended to broadly reflect the remits of departments and the portfolios of lead members. Progress in delivering the outcomes would be monitored and the Committee would receive a quarterly update on the outcome most directly related to Children and Family Services.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were raised:

- i) A member commented that more detail was required in the Plan around how outcomes would be achieved and it was agreed that more information would be provided on this.
- ii) In relation to sub-outcome 7.1, a query was raised around how collaboration between partners would be strengthened. The Director of Children and Family Services explained that this work was far reaching and linked to the Children and Families Partnership Plan. A number of actions were proposed, including strengthening pathways, continuing to work with families and strengthening the Children and Families Wellbeing Service. Key was ensuring that the focus of any work was achieving the right outcome for the child. A lot of work had been undertaken around issues relating to the youngest children and those who would benefit from additional support being identified at the earliest opportunity. It was acknowledged that the number of children taking up the free early education entitlement had decreased as a result of Covid-19 but work was now taking place to promote the benefits of early education.

- iii) A question was asked in relation to sub-outcome 7.2, in particular the building of new schools and the number of independent school places being funded by the County Council. The Director reported that there was a five year strategy for the provision of mainstream school places and the development of SEND provision, which had been included in the High Needs Plan. Over the last three years, £20m had been invested in SEND provision but it was acknowledged that more was still required. The Director stated that a number of independent school places were still used and although the preference was for children to attend a school within Leicestershire, key was ensuring that they were in an appropriate setting that met their needs.
- iv) In terms of EHCP processes, it was important to ensure that children's needs were clearly identified within a school setting as soon as possible so that the necessary support was provided in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice. A Multi-Agency Panel was now in place to determine whether it was appropriate to assess a child for an EHCP and where it was not agreed to undertake an assessment, other support was suggested. This process had led to more consistent decision making.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the update on the work undertaken on the Council's Strategic Plan be noted;
- b) That the Chief Executive be requested to consider the comments now raised as part of the consultation on the Council's draft Strategic Plan 2022-26.