

REPORT FROM THE LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LEAD MEMBER FOR RESOURCES TO THE MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL ON WEDNESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2015

Report from Children's Services

A-Level and vocational success for the Island

Post 16 students studying in the Island's sixth forms have been successful this year in national A-level examinations and vocational qualifications. During the 2014/15 academic year, 706 post-16 students have been working towards A-level and equivalent advance level qualifications in the Isle of Wight College, school sixth forms and training providers on the Isle of Wight. Early provisional results indicate that students have been successful with 93 per cent achieving the national benchmark of two A* to E passes at A-Level, or their vocational equivalent. This is a two percentage point improvement on the 91 per cent result in 2014. However, we recognise that there is still much for us to do to improve educational outcomes locally and we must all continue to have high aspirations for children and young people on the Isle of Wight.

GCSE Results

Provisional GCSE results show a significant improvement for the Isle of Wight, with the overall proportion of pupils achieving five A* to C GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, rising by three per cent from 2014.

The early results reported by the Island's six secondary schools show that 48 per cent of pupils achieved five A* to C GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, up from 45 per cent in 2014.

Limited national information is available at the current time, but early indications are of a slight improvement from the 2014 national figure of 56.6 per cent, for the same measure.

There has also been an increase in the proportion of Isle of Wight pupils achieving grade C and above in mathematics and English as separate subjects, both improving by two per cent to 61 per cent and 64 per cent respectively.

Around 1,500 pupils on the Island sat GCSE exams this summer.

The achievement of five or more A* to C grades including mathematics and English is still the government target for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 (aged 16) this year, although new measures will be in place from 2016.

Achieving this benchmark prepares young people for post-16 education and training opportunities.

When the official results are published later in the autumn, schools will also be judged against some new targets, including the progress that children have made in English and mathematics, and their performance in their 'best eight' subjects.

Visits

Since the last Full Council I have had the opportunity to visit five more schools to see for myself the work underway to raise educational standards in our schools and educational outcomes for our children. These schools were:

- The Bay CE Primary;
- St Blasius Shanklin CE Primary Academy;
- Lanesend Primary;
- Cowes Enterprise College;
- Nine Acres Primary.

Social Work Innovation Fund

As previously reported the Isle of Wight Council, alongside Hampshire County Council, is part of a £4 million bid to transform children's social care. The adverts are now out for the two Family Intervention Teams. These teams will each have an adult mental health worker, a substance misuse worker and a domestic abuse worker. Each team will work alongside one of our children in need teams. Their focus is to work with the adults in the family to bring about rapid change to support the social worker for the child. Each team member will be linked to local specialist services (Adult Mental Health Services, Island Recovery Integrated Services and the Women's Refuge) bringing together a partnership approach to prevent children coming into the care of the council.

Corporate parents

As part of our commitment as corporate parents we have developed an apprenticeship programme for children in care and care leavers. We are creating these opportunities with support from across all our council services. We are offering apprenticeships for them to work for the 'family firm' as other parents do for their own children. The first care leaver apprenticeship has been recruited to through the Innovation Fund investment.

I have also developed a business card for all elected members and town and parish councillors. This includes all the information and telephone numbers that you need if a member of the public talks to you about any concern that they have about a child.

The Prince's Trust Team programme

I am pleased to report that 12 young people have completed The Prince's Trust Team programme. This is a 12-week personal development course, which concluded with a presentation at Ryde fire station on 30 July. This is the first time the Island's fire service has hosted the course, on behalf of the Hampshire fire service. The team programme offers work experience, qualifications, practical skills, community projects and a residential week for young people, aged 16 to 25, who are not in education, employment or training. Young people developed their team-

working and communication skills, contributed to their community and gained nationally recognised qualifications. They have also completed their CVs, that now include references from the fire service and their work placements and lists all the skills learnt over the 12 week course.

Primary School Island Games

Hundreds of children headed to Sandown's Fairway Sports Complex on Saturday 11 July for the annual Isle of Wight Primary School Island Games. Pupils from 32 schools took part in this popular sporting event which has been held every year since 2008. Organised by the Isle of Wight Council's Sports Unit, primary school children competed in seven sports during the day whilst representing an international island. The Cayman Islands were represented by schools from the Bay area, Cowes area schools were Menorca, West Wight schools represented Bermuda, schools from the Newport area were the Western Isles, while St Helena and Greenland were represented by schools from Ryde and Ventnor respectively. During the day there was a 'come and try' zone for people to try a sport. The council's One Card team was on hand to promote all activities that are available at our local authority leisure centres. Thanks must be extended to all staff who helped organise and run the event. Their hard work made the day a great success.

Short Breaks Fun Day

The council's Short Breaks Team hosted the annual fun and information day which was launched by Mark King from Level 42. The day was held at our Medina Leisure Centre on Friday 24 July and is another example of how services across the council join together to support children and their families. Many children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs and their families from across the Island had fun, despite the weather outside. The day featured a range of activities and entertainment, including a bouncy castle, circus skills, arts and crafts, dancing and a number of fun games. As well as the entertainment on offer, there was also a chance for families to meet local short breaks providers and find out more about the activities they provide. Credit goes to the team, who implemented a wet weather plan to move the event indoors as a result of a Met Office wet weather warning only a few days prior.

Beaulieu House

Our Beaulieu House respite and residential services are 100 per cent occupied. This means that we are looking after Island children with high levels of need locally close to their friends, school and families. The Friends of Beaulieu have supported a further 33 nights of respite a year and during this summer they have supported the provision of an additional 30 sessions a week. This is another example of how we as a council work with others in our community to support children and their families.

Safeguarding children in language schools

Following concerns being raised by the Children's Select Committee I have written to Andrew Turner MP, in respect of the safeguarding policies and procedures employed by some language schools on the Island. I am aware this is a national issue not one simply confined to the Island and in light of that I have asked Andrew to consider raising the matter in the House of Commons so the issues can be fully discussed.

Special educational need or disability (SEND) local offer

I am delighted to report that our SEND local offer has now been up and running for a year. Over this time the offer has been developed with parents, young people, education, health and social care colleagues. The offer supports children and young people who are aged between 0 and 25 years old with a special educational need or disability (SEND). You can find a wide variety of information and signposting on the Local Offer website, including, where to find help and support regarding educational, health, social care issues. To view the local offer website, elected members can visit www.iwight.com/localoffer.

Report from Exchequer Services:

Help centres

The Customer Interface Project has now progressed following Executive approval at the meeting of 12 August. As a result, self-serve computers are now being located in Sandown and Freshwater libraries and library staff are being trained to assist residents with online transactions.

The trial of new ways of working at Ryde Help Centre which started on 13 July has been positively received by residents. The help centre floor walker is greeting customers as they come into the help centre so that they can be directed to the most appropriate means of resolving their enquiry.

Discussions have been held with housing associations to raise funding of £10,000 so that the Credit Union can be retained on Island. It is hoped that stakeholders will contribute to this valued service especially in light of the Department for Work and Pensions implementing the Universal Credit from mid-December.

Revenues

The team is focused on maximising income collection with prompt billing and recovery processes.

The “in year” collection rate for council tax achieved at the end of July was 39.29 per cent (target 29 per cent). This represents an increase in cash terms of £1,127,409 collected over the previous year as the net collectable debt has increased by approximately £2.5 million when compared with the previous year.

The “in year” collection rate for business rates for July was 46.86 per cent (target 47 per cent). There is £886,000 more collected than the previous year, with £158,000 less collectable debt than the previous year.

The collection rate for sundry debt for July was 91.46 per cent (target 70 per cent).

The project with Capacity Grid to increase the new homes bonus grant is progressing well. A number of empty properties have been returned to occupation. The project closes at the end of September when the full financial impact of this work can be reported.

Report from Financial Management

- Budget review report to the meeting with proposals for in-year savings to resolve this year's budget issues and options to deliver a balanced budget in 2016/17;
- External audit of the council's accounts progressing well and unlikely to be any significant issues to report, report to Audit Committee on 29 September;
- Pension Fund accounts audit complete with no significant issues to report, report to Audit Committee on 29 September;
- As part of the annual audit process the auditors' report on their Value for Money Conclusion as well as the previous year's accounts, on this occasion their report to the Audit Committee will be influenced by the content of the budget report to Full Council on 2 September and the prospects for delivering a balanced budget in future years, depending on the results of the autumn spending review.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight devolution deal

A considerable amount of time in August has been given over to working with leaders and chief officers from all of the 14 other local authorities across Hampshire to develop a devolution offer to be proposed to government by 4 September – the government's submission date. The paper elsewhere on this agenda summarises the progress made and the latest version of the devolution deal prospectus was emailed to all Members in the early evening of Friday 28 August. I will update members further following the further meeting of leaders and chief executives to consider the draft prospectus taking place on 1 September.

Councillor Jonathan Bacon

Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services and Lead Member for Resources