

## **People Scrutiny Commission Statement to the Cabinet Meeting on 14 September 2021**

At the People Scrutiny Commission meeting on 19 July 2021 Members agreed to submit the following comments to Cabinet;

### **1. Response to the independent review of Bristol's policies and actions for people with learning disabilities and autism**

The Scrutiny Commission commends the Council for commissioning this report. The Commission notes that, for too long, autism as a condition has not been fully recognised, and the way people are treated within the education, health and criminal justice systems need to be addressed. Whilst appreciating that system change requires a measured response rather than a 'quick fix', Members request that an action plan be developed by way of co-production with people with lived experiences as quickly as possible, and with regular updates and opportunities to engage in its progress available to all stakeholders.

The Commission would like an opportunity to engage in how the Council considers its responses to the recommendations contained in the report and would welcome an update by way of a briefing to help inform them whether this should be considered further on this year's Scrutiny Work Programme.

### **2. Response to the Bristol Alternative Learning Provision review report**

Members note that the issues raised, which include lack of appropriate provision, have been around for many years, and so the report is welcomed, as is the fact there is now a joined-up approach to address issues.

Scrutiny Members heard, at the Public Forum item, the view that Parent and Carers' involvement in decisions about alternative learning provision has not been satisfactory, and so Scrutiny members seek assurances that, in future, parents and carers will be fully engaged in co-production of development in alternative learning provision (ALP).

We note that, whilst the numbers of permanently excluded children in our city has reduced considerably in recent years, the use and associated costs of ALP has increased, resulting in the lived experiences of children and their families remaining being excluded from the mainstream.

The Commission is concerned about the number of children with Special Educational Needs within Alternative Learning Provision, and has the view that expansion of special school places should be a priority.

### **3. School Places reports**

The Commission welcomes the reports, and the Chair expresses some optimism, especially about specialist places. However it is also noted that there is a dependence on unconfirmed

funding, as not all of Phase 1 had been accounted for, and it is not yet known how much funding will be required for Phase 2.

The Commission is therefore requesting an update when funding is confirmed and it is known what will be achieved.

The Commission is concerned about reports of further delays to the opening of the required mainstream secondaries at Silverthorne Lane and The Park, and that this risks an ability to meet the basic legal requirement of having sufficient school places to cover need in the mainstream secondary and well as special place arenas.

Scrutiny Members remain concerned about how the Council plans to meet the demand for secondary places; and raise concerns about the number of children and young people still without special school place provision.