

Cabinet Member's Briefing for Children's PDS, 30 January 2018

Narrowing the Attainment Gap

I recently met with the Cllrs Millar and Hardman with key officers to discuss the challenge of narrowing the gap for disadvantaged pupils, including those from BME communities, for whom recent published data has indicated concerning performance against national figures. Officers have been asked to prepare a proposal for a scrutiny workshop to examine the issues and Cllr Millar has agreed to seek officer support to plan and organise that for the panel.

Capital investments

I have recently made a Single Member Decision to approve the release of £0.5m capital to expand local capacity for children and young people with SEND. This decision will support an increase of 107 new school and college places (54 at Post 16 and 53 in pre 16). A further £577k is due in grants from DfE over the coming three years and the capital programme within our February budget proposals includes provision to 'frontload' this investment so that it can be committed ahead of us receiving the grant. I have also asked for further proposals for 'phase 3' of this investment programme, which I believe will enable us to provide high quality education locally for more children and young people with SEND, which is better for them and their families as well as being better for our budget.

I am also pleased to confirm that I have made a Single Member Decision to approve capital funding to replace a pre-fabricated building at Twerton Infants School which was beyond economic repair. This is a further demonstration of our commitment to ensuring that school buildings are fit for purpose and provide safe and secure environments for learning.

Working with other Local Authorities

I recently attended the South West regional Lead Members network, which provided a stimulating conversation with Ofsted who were quite rightly challenging us on some of the educational performance data. I will be representing the Lead Members group at a forthcoming meeting of the regional Sector Led Improvement group for Children's Services, which is linking up with DfE, LGA and the South West Chief Executives to generate additional momentum to improve services – with a particular focus on children's social care, given the relative weak overall position of South West authorities in Ofsted judgements published in the last 4 years.

WECA

I am also working with the WECA Skills Advisory Board who are looking at post 16 funding and I am keen to see how we can ensure the local area can benefit from that opportunity.

Councillor Paul May

Cabinet Member for Children & Young People