

Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

Chairman: Cllr Leigh Redman

Division and Local Member: All

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1. Summary

- 1.1.** The Scrutiny for Policies Children and Families Committee is required by the Constitution to make an annual report to the Council and to provide each other meeting of the Council with a summary progress report and outcomes of scrutiny. This summary report covers the work of the Committee's meeting in June 2018 since our Annual report to Council last May.
- 1.2.** The main focus of our work programme will be to ensure the continuous improvement and delivery of the 7 priorities contained within the Children and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP). In this endeavour the Chair of the Committee has suggested and Members of the Committee have agreed to volunteer to act as a 'champion' for each of the 7 programmes.
- 1.3.** We have been pleased to see continuing progress in many areas of the Council's improvement agenda for children and young people and our central focus will be to constantly ask - What impact does that have on children in Somerset?
- 1.4.** The Committee has 9 elected Members. We also have 7 co-opted members. We have 2 Church representative vacancies along with 1 Parent Governor vacancy and we are looking at ways to ensure those positions are occupied. We have retained our Schools Compact representative and a representative from the Schools Forum; our co-opted members have voting rights on education matters only. We look forward to once again hearing first hand testimony from front line staff who will we invite to attend and participate at our meetings. We will also consider proposals for visiting settings in Somerset.
- 1.5.** Members of the Council are reminded that:
 - all Members are invited to attend meetings of all the Council's Scrutiny Committees and to contribute freely on any agenda item;
 - any Member could propose a topic for inclusion on the Scrutiny Work Programmes;
 - any Member can be asked by the Committee to contribute information and evidence, and to participate in specific scrutiny reviews.

2. Background

2.1. Scrutiny Work Programme

As noted above the focus of our work programme will be the 7 priorities of the CYPP with practical work to support and challenge service improvement. The Committee fully supported this at our first meeting of the quadrennium and we look forward to working with the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and other Officers to ensure topics dealt with during Scrutiny meetings support the improvement process.

2.2. Each of our future meetings will have specific agenda items to consider the work programme and this will allow members and officers to suggest items we should scrutinise in more depth. We are also very keen to enhance our ability to monitor our suggested outcomes and recommended actions to ensure these have been progressed, and to assist us in this we will continue to review our outcome tracker at every meeting to ensure this is meaningful.

2.3. We will be carefully planning our future work load and requested agenda items. We have found previously that forming Task and Finish Groups to focus on a specific area of work has been a good use of resources and we will consider areas that might benefit from this approach along with visiting settings in Somerset.

2.4. 15 June 2018

Our meeting began by considering the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) update report which set out the actions the Council and its partners are taking to continue and sustain improvements in Children's Services. The CYPP is reported on a quarterly basis and this report looked at progress from January – March 2018. The report provided a summary of activity and progress, complimented by each of the 7 programmes highlight report and overall there had been improvement in the programmes and they were showing good progress. The Chair explained to new Members of the Committee the practice of each Member being a champion for one of the CYPP programmes, and he thanked those that volunteered for that role and asked Officers to brief the new Member champions to provide them with information of their topic areas.

Next, we considered a report that provided an update of implementation activity and progress against the Somerset SEND strategic outcomes in response to the recommendations of the Gloucestershire peer review. It was noted that there was a sharp increase in statutory assessment requests and the focus of performance must address the quality of EHCP's and reviews. Our final agenda item was an update on the extended entitlement (30 hours) scheme. It was noted that all of 6 projects had been successful in securing funding from the Department of Education. The projects were implemented as part of securing sufficiency duties for the introduction of the extended entitlement (30 hours) funding for eligible working families in the county. An update on the 5 capital projects that had been completed and were contributing to the extended entitlement (30 hours) for three and four-year olds in Somerset. The Committee welcomed this good news story and congratulated all involved.

3. Consultations undertaken

- 3.1. The Committee invites all Councillors to attend and contribute to its meetings. The Committee Chair and Vice Chair invite all Lead Officers and prospective report authors to attend their pre-meetings however recently both submission of agenda items, reports and attendance at pre-meetings have slipped.

4. Implications

- 4.1. The Committee carefully considers reports, and often asks for further information about the implications as outlined in the reports considered at its meetings. For further details of the reports considered by the Committee please contact the author of this report.

5. Background papers

- 5.1. Further information about the Committee including dates of meetings in the new quadrennium, and agendas & reports from previous meetings are available via the Council's website.

www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.