

Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

Chairman: Cllr Leigh Redman

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer and Author: Jamie Jackson – Governance Manager - Scrutiny

Contact Details: 01823 359040 jjackson@somerset.gov.uk

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 the Council with a summary progress report and the outcomes of its scrutiny. This report covers the work of the Committee on 20 July, 14 September, 08 and 19 October, and 16 November 2018.
- 1.2.** Our Work Programme focuses on delivery of the seven priorities of the Children and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP) 2016-2019. Each priority is delivered by an Improvement Programme. Members of the Committee act as a 'champion' for each Programme.
- 1.3.** This Committee is building on the progress made by its predecessor Committee. This Committee's default question is 'What impact does this have on children in Somerset?'
- 1.4.** The Committee has nine elected Members. It also has seven co-opted members. It has two vacancies for Church representatives and one for a Parent Governor. We are looking to fill those vacancies. We have retained our Schools Compact representative and a representative from the Schools Forum. The co-opted members have voting rights on education matters only. We look forward to again hearing first hand testimony from front line staff.
- 1.5.** Members of the Council are reminded that they:
 - are invited to attend meetings of Scrutiny Committees and to contribute to any agenda item;
 - can propose a topic for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme;
 - can be asked by the Committee to contribute information and evidence, and to participate in scrutiny reviews.

2. Scrutiny Work Programme

- 2.1.** In our first meeting of the Quadrennium, the Committee agreed that its Work Programme would be shaped by CYPP 2016-19's seven priorities and corresponding Improvement Programmes. The Committee looks forward to working with the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and his officer team to ensure the Committee's business supports the overall improvement in our Children's and Families Services.

Each meeting agenda will select aspects of the portfolio of Improvement Programmes. This will encourage Members and officers to suggest items for scrutiny. We wish to strengthen our ability to monitor that our desired outcomes are being achieved. One of the ways we shall do this is by using an Outcome Tracker at every meeting as a benchmark.

2018 Meeting Reports

2.2. 20 July

This meeting considered four main items: the governance of the CYPP 2016-19; changes to the Family Support Service (previously known as early help hubs'); prevention; and the new duties of Care Leavers.

Governance of the CYPP 2016-19. The CYPP 2016-19 is a three-year multi agency plan that sets out the actions that we and our partners need to take to continue and sustain improvements in Children's Services. The Committee noted that the CYPP was overseen by the Somerset Children's Trust (SCT). Its Executive meets quarterly. Its Chair is from the Council and the Vice Chair alternates annually between the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group and Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

The seven improvement programmes in the Plan are managed by the relevant Board for each improvement area. The Executive Meeting receives Highlight Reports from the lead of each of the seven Improvement Programmes. Our subsequent Scrutiny Committee considers those Highlight Reports. We accepted the report.

Changes to the Family Support Service (FSS). Having considered, in February 2018, the proposed changes in detail and having heard the concerns of a number of families that used the service, the Committee noted that it had made representations to the Cabinet. The Committee raised with officers points made back in February, including on how the changes were being delivered and those changes were impacting families using those services. The Committee asked that changes to the FSS report return to the Committee.

Prevention. Members heard that Prevention meant all actions aimed at eradicating, eliminating or minimizing the impact of disease and disability. We received a presentation on the Edge of Care Prevention Services. The Council had good 'edge of care' work to prevent children from coming into care, and the local authority was reinforcing this by helping children to return home from care. The Prevention service plan had been linked to the Ofsted recommendations. An overview was provided of the current and projected coverage and staffing. The report was accepted.

New statutory responsibilities to Care Leavers. Guidance on New duties to Care Leavers had been published in February 2018 with the new duties becoming effective from April 2018. Implementation of the Leaving Care Service and the duties enshrined in new legislation contributed to Priority 6 of CYPP 2016-19. It was noted that other measures such as discount vouchers for Care Leavers in high street shops, cafes, and cinemas etc were being considered for the 685 current Care Leavers aged 16 to 24. Care Leavers were being written to inform them of the various changes and how they might

best be able to take advantage of them.

2.3. 14 September

This meeting considered four main items: changes to the FSS; development of the CYPP 2016-19; the complaints procedure; and development of the Somerset Health and Care Strategy.

Changes to the FSS. Changes to the FSS looked at the implementation of changes to the PIMs team, plans for further engagement on future service delivery and the impact on children and families. There had been consultation with parents and engagement events with discussions on how the new service would look. Work was being undertaken to look at jointly funding services. Parents had been offered an individual meeting if they wanted it. The intention was to move away from a blanket approach towards one that was more discriminating in confirming that only those who needed the service received it.

When engagement finished there would be a further update to the Committee. The Committee noted that while the changes had been implemented the Council had continued to work closely with children, parents and schools to ensure that individual needs were met.

Development of the CYPP 2016-19. We then received an update regarding the development of the three year Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) which started in April 2016 setting out the actions the council and its partners were taking to continue and sustain improvements in children's services. This report commented upon the activity of the first quarter (March to July 2018) of Year 3 which provided a summary of activity and progress, complemented by each of the 7 programmes' Highlight Reports. Members nominated as programme champions and officers involved in the programmes were reminded of the need to engage for updates and progress prior to committee meetings, and the report was accepted.

The Complaints Procedure. The Committee scrutinised the operation of the complaints procedure for Children's Services, Adult Services and Economy and Community Infrastructure. It concentrated on the part of the report that concerned Children's Services. The Committee noted the report.

Development of the Somerset Health and Care Strategy. The development of this Strategy had been jointly led by SCC and Somerset CCG. Members were assured that a strong patient and public voice would inform the Strategy. The main elements of the Strategy were likely to be: urgent and emergency care; proactive care; long term conditions and frailty; mental health and learning disabilities; children's and maternity services; planned care; and cancer. The Strategy would be further developed during September and early October. A decision would be made on which proposals should be part of a public consultation. The Committee accepted the report.

2.4. 08 October – Call-In

This meeting was unscheduled as it was a Call-In of the Cabinet Decision on Savings Measure CAF14a ('Proposals for the alteration and/or reduction of early help services provided to children and their families – getset').

The Committee heard questions and statements from 26 members of the public in person, several anonymous submissions, and submissions from members of the public unable to attend read by the Monitoring Officer. Statements and the result from a survey of service users were received on behalf of Family Voices Somerset. The Director of Children's Services thanked all those who had submitted comments, observations and questions, and responded. It was agreed that a written response to all submissions would be published on the Council's website, including the 12 anonymous submissions.

The sponsor of the Call-In, Councillor Redman, explained why he had asked for the Cabinet decision on CAF14a to be reviewed. His reasons centred on the limited data on which the Cabinet had made its decision on 12 September. He questioned whether accurate data had been provided to Cabinet in order to justify the statements made in the CAF14a savings proposal.

The Committee had a detailed discussion, with further statements from the DCS. Some information provided at the meeting and in the Call-In Report had not been provided to the Cabinet on 12 September.

The Committee considered the data, its interpretation and Cabinet's decision-making. There was much debate on the data for, and understanding of, demand, especially for Level 2 and Level 3 services, and the implication for case loading.

In summary, the Committee considered whether it was assured by the Cabinet's decision on CAF 14-a on 12 September. The Committee recommended that the Cabinet receive a report based on that presented by the DCS at its next meeting. The Committee recommended that Cabinet should wait for the consultation on CAF 14b to be completed in order to allow for a comprehensive proposal to come back to Cabinet for decision in February 2019.

2.5. 19 October

This meeting considered four main items: the West Somerset Opportunity Area Programme; the consultation on Savings Proposal CAF 14-b; the Young Carers Service; and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme.

The West Somerset Opportunity Area (WSOA) Programme. This Programme aimed to improve social mobility and opportunities for young people in 12 areas across the country that had identified communities. The plan, published in October 2017, had encouraged working across business, education and community to create and maintain more opportunities for young people. It was acknowledged that most of the other Opportunity Areas were in urban areas and presented different challenges to those found in West Somerset. Members asked officers to be mindful of ensuring that other areas in Somerset could benefit from things learned in the WSOA. They welcomed the approach that the new initiatives introduced and trialled were done so with sustainability in mind. Officers confirmed that evaluation aimed to learn lessons and share good practice. The Committee accepted the report.

The Consultation on Savings Proposal CAF 14-b. The CAF14-b Savings Proposal had been approved at the 12 September meeting of the Cabinet. The

Committee had requested more information about the next steps before the scheduled Cabinet decision in February 2019. The purpose of the consultation would be to understand the impact of the Council no longer providing services for children with additional needs (at Level 2 of the Effective Support for Children and Families in Somerset guidance), and how best the Council, as the lead agency, could ensure effective early help across the partnership in future. Members encouraged Officers to ensure that information was provided in as wide a variety of locations as possible to allow for maximum participation by service users as not all those using the services would have access to the internet. The Committee asked that a report be provided at a future meeting and that officers reconsider the length of the proposed consultation period as the eight weeks included the two weeks of the Christmas holiday.

The Young Carers Service. Following the proposals that were initially part of a Cabinet report last September (but were then withdrawn), the Committee considered how the Young Carers Service might be delivered differently in future. The Committee considered an update on the Action Plan for the service that had been made following the Committee's Task and Finish review in 2017. Commissioners had attended the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) forum earlier in the month and had further sessions planned to explore options for future services and support offers for Somerset's young carers. It was noted they were keen to know, before any design took place, what young people valued and wanted to be able to access. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the outcomes and feedback gained from the engagement would be used in any future service redesign. The Committee requested an update at the December 2018 meeting.

The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme. A further ten families had been resettled over the past year. The Committee noted that there had been many successes and achievements; and staffing had also been strengthened. Progress had been made on specific goals such as 60% of families resettled in six months and with a family member in work. The Programme remained in financial balance, being fully funded by the Home Office. There was a brief discussion about a few instances of those in the Programme who had encountered racially motivated abuse and occasional physical violence. In response to a question, it was noted that officers tried to teach families how unacceptable this behaviour was, and that it should be reported. Work was done to rebuild their confidence so they re-engaged in their local area. The Chair and Committee thanked the officer for the report and the on-going work in this area. The Committee asked for another report in 12 months.

2.6. 16 November

The four items considered in this meeting were: progress with CYPP 2016-19; shaping CYPP 2019-22; the Somerset Drug and Alcohol Service; and Savings proposal CAF 14-b.

Progress with CYPP 2016-19. The Committee was updated on progress made in Q2 (Jul - Sep) of Year 3 of this Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The Committee received a Highlight Report on each of the seven Improvement Programmes. The Committee noted that six of the seven programmes were rated Amber. It was explained that this might reflect timescales leading to completing them rather than any lack of confidence in our

ability to deliver them.

Shaping CYPP 2019-22. The Committee heard that preparatory work for CYPP 2019-22 had included: CYPP consultation days with children and young people; wider consultation with parents, carers, practitioners; partners and other Stakeholders. The views of children and young people had been sought and their priorities heard. Members urged the importance of the new three-year CYPP being understood by different audiences and being coherent and mutually supportive with other high-level plans. It was suggested that, whatever the length of the new CYPP, a two page executive summary be provided. The CYPP should be as graphical as possible, showing how work and outcomes would produce a spiral of improvement over the three year period.

The Somerset Drug and Alcohol Service (SDAS). The Committee heard about the work of the commissioned SDAS, specifically in relation to supporting young people and parents in treatment for drug/alcohol misuse. We heard from a service user who explained about how she had used the SDAS and described her experiences of recovering from alcohol abuse/addiction. She explained how she had slowly regained her own confidence and was now a mentor for others who accessed the SDAS. The Committee accepted the report.

Savings Proposal CAF 14b. The Committee heard about public consultation on the proposed changes to the Council's support and services for children and their families regarding Cabinet savings proposal CAF 14b. The purpose of the consultation would be to gauge the understanding of the impact of the Council no longer providing 'get-set' services for children with additional needs (at Level 2). There had been a pre-launch of the consultation itself at various meetings before the consultation became 'live' on 5th November. This had been supported by a Member's Information Sheet, a press release and other updates on social media. To a question on the nature of the questions within the consultation, the DCS confirmed he had written those in conjunction with the Cabinet Member. The Committee noted the report.

3. Consultations Undertaken

- 3.1. The Committee invites all Councillors to attend and contribute to its meetings. The Committee Chair and Vice-Chair invite prospective report authors to attend their pre-meetings.

4. Implications

- 4.1. The Committee carefully considers reports, and often asks for further information about the implications 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 and 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.