

Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee held on Friday 17 November 2017 at 10.00 in the Luttrell Room, County Hall, Taunton.

Present

Cllr L Redman (in the Chair)

Cllr N Bloomfield

Cllr A Bown

Cllr M Dimery

Cllr Hewitt-Cooper

Cllr T Munt (Substitute)

Cllr Pullin (Vice Chair)

Cllr J Taylor

Cllr J Williams

Apologies: Cllr J Lock
Mrs Helen Fenn (Church representative) and

Church representatives present:

Parent Governor representatives present: Mrs Ruth Hobbs.

CHYPPS & Schools Forum representatives present: Mrs Eileen Tipper - Somerset Education Partnership Board & Richard Berry – Schools Forum.

Cabinet Members present: Cllr A Groskop and Cllr F Nicholson.

Other Members present: Cllr S Coles.

37 Declarations of interest – agenda item 2

37.0 Cllr Bloomfield, Cllr Bown, Cllr Coles, Cllr Groskop, Cllr Hewitt-Cooper, Cllr James Hunt, Cllr Pullin, Cllr Redman, Cllr J Taylor and Cllr J Williams all declared a personal interest as a District and/or City/Town, Parish Councillor.

37.1 Cllr Munt declared a personal interest as a Director of a Special School.

37.2 Mrs Hobbs declared a personal interest regarding agenda item 7 as a Director Somerset Parent Carer Forum.

37.3 Mrs Tipper declared a personal interest as a trustee of CHYPPS.

38 Public question time – agenda time 3

38.0 Nigel Behan, UNITE Branch Secretary, asked some questions about agenda item 9 - Children's Services Commissioning and it was noted that those points would be addressed during consideration of that item and as the questioner could not stay to hear the responses a written reply would be sent to him and

circulated to the Committee.

Katherine See, a Children's Centre patron, spoke about the on-going consultation regarding the proposed changes to Family Support Services. In response the Assistant Director - Commissioning and Performance, thanked the questioner for their comments and noted that the consultation was on-going and that no decisions had been made. The Chair suggested that written reply be sent to the questioner and that the Officers consider arranging a meeting with the questioner to discuss the issues.

39 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2017 – agenda item 4

39.0 The Committee agreed the minutes of the last meeting were accurate, and the Chair signed them.

40 Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee work programme – agenda item 5

40.0 The Committee considered and noted the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions in forthcoming months.

40.1 The Committee considered and agreed its own work programme and the future agenda items listed. In addition the Chair requested:

A briefing report be prepared on Library Service Redesign to demonstrate that the impact of any proposed changes on children, young people and families had been considered.

That the Health and Well-Being Board be invited to attend the Joint meeting of 2 Scrutiny Committees to be held in January 2018.

That a report on EHCP's be prepared for the next meeting and include information about transitions from SEN statements and between different key stages and School.

40.2 The Committee noted the outcome tracker and the Scrutiny Manager provided updates.

41 Children Social Care – Annual Performance report – agenda item 6

41.0 The Committee considered this report provided Members with a summary of information contained within the Children's Social Care Annual Performance Report 2016/17 (attached as an Appendix). The report highlighted areas of potential concern identified within the Annual Report together with actions being undertaken to address those issues.

41.1 It was noted that Children's Social Care Annual Report is produced by the Children's Business Intelligence Team once a year and forms part of the wide range of performance reports available to Children's Social Care. It was explained that the report covered performance across a range of service areas and specifically compared performance in the year 2016/17 with the previous year, identifying trends and areas of improving and deteriorating performance.

41.2 In response to a question it was also confirmed the Council compared its performance with its statistical neighbour group of similar authorities as well as

against average performance across England as a whole. It was noted that there were 38 indicators included in the report and that 83% of those had shown an improvement when compared to previous performance, with only 4 indicators recording deterioration in performance.

- 41.3 Attention turned to the 4 specific indicators where performance had deteriorated when compared to the previous year and the report provided a commentary and a list of actions currently being undertaken to address and improve performance.
- 41.4 There was a discussion about the proportion of Initial Child Protection Conferences [ICPCs] completed on time fell slightly, from 97.0% (2015/16) to 94.9% (2016/17) and it was explained that this represented a small drop in timeliness, but the overall context was the steadily increasing number of CPCs throughout the period (from 280 in 2015/16 to 413 2016/17 which meant a 48% increase. It was noted that performance remained under weekly review through senior management performance meetings and when compared with statistical neighbours Somerset's performance in this area remains very positive.
- 41.4 The Committee also noted that the percentage of Review Child Protection Conferences [RCPCs] held on time had reduced marginally by half of 1 percent, to 98.5% however this compared favourable to figures for England as a whole where performance was recorded at 93.7%.
- 41.5 The other area where performance had decreased concerned children looked after and specifically that the percentage of children placed more than 20 miles from the home address had risen from 28.7% to 32.1%. It was explained that performance issues related to an on-going problem with a lack of availability of suitable placements. The positive results of the fostering recruitment campaign were noted and all Members were encouraged to promote this in their divisions.
- 41.6 Also of concern was the percentage of children looked after not having a Dental Assessment and this figure had fallen from 88.5% to 72.9%. In response to a question it was stated that improvement in this remained a priority, reflecting greater scrutiny and process requirements to be strengthened. A wider service response had been developed to encompass foster carers, social workers and IROs. In addition it was noted that the children looked after service had been tasked to review all cases where dental checks have not been recorded as complete, and take remedial action to ensure that all children looked after are receiving appropriate dental oversight.
- 41.7 The report was accepted.

42 Children and Young People's Plan – 2016-19 – agenda item 7

- 42.0 The Committee considered this report that provided the Committee with details of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) a three year plan that had started in April 2016 that set out the actions the Council and its partners were taking to continue and sustain improvements in Children's Services. The Plan

followed a multi-agency approach, and was overseen by the Somerset Children's Trust and had 7 improvement programmes, each managed by a relevant Board to ensure improvement in those areas, as follows:

- 42.1
 1. Supporting children, families and communities to become more resilient
 2. Promoting healthy outcomes and giving children the best start in life
 3. Embedding a 'Think Family' approach
 4. Improving emotional health and wellbeing
 5. Building skills for life
 6. Providing help early and effectively
 7. Achieving effective multi-agency support for more vulnerable children and young people and developing an excellent children's social work service.
- 42.2 The Partnership Business Manager – Children's Services, introduced the report and provided a very thorough overview of its contents, explaining the CYPP's origins after the Council received a Direction Notice from the Secretary of State for Education in November 2015 requiring a three year CYPP to be developed and implemented which the Department for Education could then use to judge how effective and sustainable improvements in children's social care functions had been.
- 42.3 It was explained by way of further background that the CYPP was the strategic plan for Somerset Children's Trust, providing the focus for partners' actions and investment and the means by which the Department for Education would measure improvement. An update of the plan was reported on a quarterly basis and the report provided details of the activity of the second quarter (July to September 2017) of Year 2 and a summary of activity and progress, supported by each a highlight report for each of the 7 programmes. The meeting therefore provided an opportunity to introduce Members to the CYPP and allow time for comments and questions on the progress at the end of the first year and to consider the actions set to progress the Plan into its second year.
- 42.4 Members heard an overview of the data contained in the Executive Summary and particular explanation and attention was given to the areas that were showing as red and therefore missing target. In addition it was reported that measures were also being used to assess the delivery of the 7 improvement programmes and a set of overarching measures designed to assess 'how we would know we had made a difference', as this would be a likely method that Ofsted may use to gauge how effect policy changes brought about by the CYPP had been during its on-going Inspection visit.
- 42.5 In respect of Programme 4 it was requested that future reports include information on the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions. There was a discussion about EHCP's and a report was requested for the next meeting and that it include information about transitions from SEN statements to EHCP's and also between different key stages and Schools.
- 42.6 In respect of Programme 5 it was requested that consideration be given to the way information was displayed, including the directional arrows.

- 42.7 In respect of Programme 6 it was requested that congratulations be sent to the Communications team for their work in raising the profile of recruiting in Children's Social Work service and also with regard to Adoption and Fostering.
- 42.8 In respect of Programme 7 it was requested that regarding outcome measures for vulnerable young people and families, Young Carers, and Troubled Families it was felt that the KPI's/targets were loose and it requested some additional information be included in future reports.
- 42.9 The Committee agreed to accept the report and the Chair wished to record the Committee's thanks for the hard work undertaken by numerous members of staff in various locations that have helped bring about improvements.

43 Children's Services Commissioning Report – agenda item 8

- 43.0 The Committee considered this report that updated Members on the overall purpose of children's services commissioning service and improvements made to date, reflecting on the journey so far, and the further progress the commissioning team was expected to make.
- 43.1 It was noted that the report highlighted the work of children's commissioning team across the seven improvement programmes of the Somerset Children and Young People's Plan, with particular focus on the achievements in programme 6 "Achieving effective, multi-agency support for more vulnerable children and young people and develop and excellent children's social work service".
- 43.2 There was a question about the number of Placement spaces in Somerset and it was acknowledged this remained a significant issue, even though there were more residential beds available in the county than required, along with some capacity in the independent fostering market. Commissioners were working more closely with providers to understand the issues and sharing the detail of Somerset's needs to ensure the right provision was available and that Somerset was the preferred commissioner.
- 43.3 There was a discussion of the report and it was noted that it would be particularly important for the Council to identify the required outcomes from each contract so that contracts were properly managed and poor performance challenged. There was a discussion about co-production, including what it meant and its effectiveness. It was requested that an update report on Pathways to Independence (P2i) be considered at a future meeting.
- 43.4 The report was accepted.

44 Young Carers Update report – agenda item 9

- 44.0 The Committee considered this report that provided an overview on progress of the Young Carers Strategic Steering Group following the recommendations made by a Task and Finish Group of the former Committee in April 2017. It was explained that the initial Task and Finish Group had held meetings in February

and March and met with Young Carers, Young Carer Professionals, Young Adult Carers, and those working in Public Health and members of the Somerset Parent Carer Forum to help inform its recommendations in April 2017.

- 44.1 It was reported that 190 young carers had been identified; all have a Young Carers Assessment. 14 had an allocated Social Worker as a result of being assessed as a Child In Need (CIN) or Child Protection (CP) case and over the last 18 months, a total of 34 young carers had been in one or other of these categories on CIN or CP. In addition it was noted that 42 Young Carers had a parent with a mental health issue and had parent(s) with a substance misuse issue.
- 44.2 The report provided an update on the actions undertaken to bring about improvements in the 4 areas that the Task and Finish Group had identified could be enhanced by bringing about change and those were: Schools; Adult Services; Health, and the Council. A recurring theme was the recruitment of a Councillor to act as Young Carers Champion.
- 44.3 The Committee requested that an update report be prepared for the 16 March 2018 meeting. 2 Councillors indicated that they were interested in becoming the Member Champion for Young Carers and undertook to discuss this with Officers outside of the meeting. There was a suggestion about providing Young carers with some form of ID and Officers undertook to consider this proposal.
- 44.4 The report was accepted.
- 45 Any other business of urgency – agenda item 10**
- 45.0 The Chairman, after ascertaining there were no other matters arising, thanked all those present for attending and declared the meeting closed.

(The meeting closed at 12:40)

Cllr Leigh Redman
Chairman – Scrutiny for Polices, Children and Families Committee