

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee held in the Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton, on Friday 8 December 2017 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr M Pullin (Deputy Chair), Cllr A Bown, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Cllr J Lock, Cllr N Taylor, Cllr J Williams, Ruth Hobbs, Mrs Eileen Tipper, Cllr T Munt and Cllr L Vijeh

Other Members present:

Apologies for absence: Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr M Dimery, Mr Richard Berry and Ms Helen Fenn

46 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

There were no declarations of interest.

47 Minutes from the meeting held on 17 November 2017 - Agenda Item 3

The Committee agreed the minutes of the last meeting as being an accurate record and the Chair signed them.

48 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

(taken just prior to agenda item 8)

Mr Nigel Behan spoke and he asked about the response to a question he had asked at the last meeting concerning Commissioning. He then also asked a number of questions about the on-going consultation regarding the proposed changes to Family Support Services with particular reference to a document that provided feedback from a 'Market engagement event' held on 26 September 2017.

In response a Consultant in Public Health, thanked the questioner for his comments and replied. It was agreed that a written response would be sent to Mr Behan and copied to the Committee.

49 SEND Peer review - update - Agenda Item 6

The Committee considered this report that provided Members with a summary of progress made following a peer review of the Council carried out last May by Gloucestershire County Council, as part of the preparation for a Local Area Inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disability 0-25 (SEND 0-25) by OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Members were reminded that although the peer review had acknowledged that there were some good practices and initiatives throughout the service it was thought that a local area inspection would be likely to find 'significant weaknesses' in practice, based on the progress made to date in the implementation of SEND reforms and a lack of evidence to display the positive impact in relation to outcomes for children across Somerset.

The peer review had recommended priority areas and a lead officer had been identified to drive through a rapid response and good progress was reported across all areas. The priority area groups were meeting fortnightly to ensure improvements required to address the findings of the peer review were being implemented and they also reported progress to the established multi-agency SEND 0-25 Intervention group.

The Committee received a lengthy PowerPoint presentation from Officers in different areas that were involved in the delivery of the priority action plan including a former young person champion who was now a SEND Commissioning Officer. There was a thorough discussion of the progress being made and answers were provided to a number of questions.

There was a question regarding the provision/sufficiency of Special School and Resource Base places and also about the future of Queen Camel School and it was requested that an answer be provided. There was a question about the length of time for those attending SEN Panels and the Chair encouraged Members to make contact with the Lead Officer about attending/observing such Panels.

The report and presentation were accepted and the Chair expressed thanks on behalf of the Committee for the progress made so far. It was suggested and agreed that a further update be provided in the Spring.

50 **Somerset Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2016/17 - Agenda Item 7**

The Committee considered this Annual Report of the SSCB that provided an overview on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and the promotion on the welfare of children in the local area. The Annual Report, a statutory requirement of the Children Act, offered of a transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services and identified where improvements were required.

Attention was drawn to progress made on achieving improvements in the 4 areas the SSCB had identified as priorities (Early Help, multi-agency safeguarding, neglect, child sexual exploitation and children missing). Also the report summarised key learning points from serious case reviews and other learning and quality assurance activity undertaken by the Board and others.

The report was introduced by Mrs Sally Halls, the Chair of the SSCB, who stated that the way the SSCB and its partners worked together to keep children safe in Somerset had improved over the past year. Many children and families were receiving more effective services, often at an earlier stage than previously. A DVD was shown which highlighted the outcomes of a Serious Case Review 'Operation Fenestra' which had focused upon a number of Somerset's children who had suffered serious harm as a result of being sexually exploited.

There was a brief discussion about learning lessons highlighted from previous reviews such as 'Operation Fenestra' and revisiting the conclusions/findings to

see if they had been acted upon and implemented. Mrs Halls confirmed the SSCB did use learning from previous reviews and carried out audits to ascertain if recommendations had been embedded. Mrs Halls also noted that lots of problems discovered in other areas did not happen in Somerset. The SSCB was committed to developing improved multi-agency collaboration to progress that type of safeguarding work and to drive the strategy and action plan for the prevention of child sexual exploitation.

Members heard that the Annual Report highlighted that the SSCB was more aware about ensuring the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements although Mrs Halls acknowledged there was still work to do to improve the quality and consistency of services, to strengthen early help arrangements, and to promote improvement in key areas such as neglect and the exploitation of children.

It was noted that as well as providing an assessment of progress made against the SSCB's priorities the Annual Report also looked at the impact of partner activity and the impact of the SSCB's work. During the course of the previous year the SSCB had listened to children and young people, their families, and the practitioners that worked with and provided services for them.

The priorities of the SSCB for 2017/18 were highlighted and they were noted and in addition Mrs Halls stated that she wished to also take a closer look at the risk regarding previously convicted sex offenders released from prison and living in their old/own homes and also what could be done to prevent child suicides.

The Annual Report was accepted. It was noted that the work of the SSCB, including broader partnership working, would become even more important as the responsibility for safeguarding children would change in 2019 to become a tripartite function between the Council, the Health Service and the Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

51 **Family Support Services - Agenda Item 8**

The Committee received an update provided by a Public Health Consultant who used a PowerPoint presentation to provide an overview of the headline figures from the recent public engagement exercise.

It was stated that 488 people had completed the consultation questionnaire and feedback had been taken from 346 people had attended consultation drop-in sessions and/or targeted focus groups. 38 responses had come through Diversity Voice including from members of the Polish, Hungarian and Romanian communities. In addition a petition called 'Save Wellington Children's Centre it plays a vital part in our community to families' with 682 signatories was received along with 44 emails from individuals and groups.

There was a brief discussion about a bar graph that showed, by District Council areas, where in Somerset the responses received during the consultation had emanated. It was requested that further clarification be provided about the graph and also that the presentation be circulated to members and uploaded to

the Committee's webpage. It was noted that the highest proportion of responses came from those within the 25-34 and 35-49 age ranges.

The next steps of the project were identified and it was noted there would be a workshop for those staff involved in the project/consultation to consider how the consultation feedback would effect the final proposals for main hub locations and associated impact assessments. In response to a question it was noted that Councillors although not invited to the workshop in December would be able to consider the draft proposals at the 26 January meeting of the Committee ahead of the Cabinet's meeting on 12 February 2018.

There was a discussion about the feedback document from the Market Engagement Event in September 2017 and a question about the how in Wiltshire Hub Schools had been used and it was explained that the comments on the document were the responses that had been captured from the potential providers who had attended that event. Also it was noted that any potential outcome, including an in-house model, might be subject to legal challenge.

The update was accepted and it was noted that a further report would be provided at the 26 January meeting.

52 Scrutiny Work Programme - Agenda Item

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

The Committee considered and agreed its own work programme and the future agenda items listed, and it was requested that a future agenda item consider a proposed Paediatric/Maternity review.

The Committee noted the outcome tracker and the Scrutiny Manager provided updates, including on the topic of DBS checks for Members.

53 Ofsted inspection feedback - Agenda Item 9

The Committee received a verbal update from the Director of Children's Services (DCS) on the recent return visit of the Ofsted inspectors. Although the DCS noted the final report from the Inspectors would not be available until January during their re-inspection of Somerset they had informally confirmed that significant progress made in improving services for vulnerable children.

Members also heard that the provisional feedback noted that overall performance management information was of very good quality and encompassed many aspects of the service. However, the DCS also noted that the Inspectors had emphasised the need to improve the consistency and quality of practice, recording and management oversight in all areas of the service to provide excellent services and outcomes for children.

The DCS paid tribute to fellow Officers who had worked very hard over the time of the 4 week Inspection which had also included an immense amount of preparation work in the period leading up to the inspection.

The Chair thanked the DCS for the update and also wished to record his and the Committee's thanks to all those Officers and others whose work across Somerset was making a real difference to the lives of children, young people and families. The update was accepted.

54 **Any other urgent items of business** - Agenda Item 10

There were no other items of business and the Chair thanked all those present for attending and closed the meeting at 12:47 wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

(The meeting ended at 12.47 pm)

CHAIRMAN