

## **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 20 April 2018 at 10.00 am

**Present:** Cllr L Redman (Chairman), Cllr J Lock, Mrs Eileen Tipper, Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr A Bown, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Ruth Hobbs, Cllr M Pullin (Vice-Chair) Cllr N Taylor and Cllr J Williams

**Other Members present:** Cllr S Coles, Cllr H Davies, Cllr A Govier, Cllr F Nicholson

**Apologies for absence:** Ms Helen Fenn and Mr Richard Berry

### **1 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2**

Eileen Tipper declared an interest as a member of the Community Council for Somerset.

Ruth Hobbs declared an interest as a Director of the Somerset Parent Carer Forum and noted that she served on the Committee in her capacity as a School Governor.

### **2 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 16 March 2018 - Agenda Item 3**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 16 March 2018 were accepted as being accurate and signed by the Chair.

### **3 Scrutiny Work Programme - Agenda Item 5**

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.

The Committee noted the outcome.

### **Public Question Time – Agenda Item 4**

18 members of the public had registered to speak about agenda item 6 Changes to the Physical Impairment and Medical Support (PIMS) Team, and the majority of those attended the meeting along with a number of other people interested in this item. Those that did speak expressed their concern and frustration at how the proposed changes to the PIMS had been conveyed to them. This had created a great deal of uncertainty amongst those families and children that used the PIMS service. It was clear that the PIMS team was greatly valued and many spoke about the transformative affect the work of the PIMS team had on the lives of young people and their families in Somerset. All those who had submitted questions were advised they would receive a written response.

A verbal response was provided by the Director of Children's Services. He began by apologising for the way in which the process had been dealt with so far and undertook to improve the Council's contact and communications with those children and families that would be effected by any changes and also with affected members of staff.

He further noted that during the summer term the Council would hold meetings with all those children and their families to ascertain their views and what they felt they required from the PIMS team in future. He welcomed the report and recommendations made in a submission received from the Somerset Parent Carer Forum and repeated his commitment to ensuring all children remained in a mainstream setting and that the Council would endeavour to obtain the views of the children and families that used the PIMS service.

## 5 **SEND Peer Review Update - Agenda Item 6**

The Committee began by considering the report requested at its last meeting to provide an overview of the PIMS team and the proposed changes that had been prompted by a change in which central government funding would be allocated.

The Committee held a thorough discussion, asking a number of questions that the Corporate Director answered when he stated his commitment to hold meetings with staff and children and families during the summer term to properly ascertain the direction of travel for proposed changes. He repeated his apology from earlier in the meeting that the process to date had not been handled well and noted the Council had to deal with a number of financial challenges. However this should not prevent the Council from communicating effectively with those affected by any changes proposed to the PIMS team. The way the Government provided funding in this area had changed and it meant that funding was now provided in 3 ways rather than a single route and this had necessitated a review of how services could best be provided in future in a sustainable way and that the Council can fund and support. He underlined his commitment to children remaining in mainstream settings, and the Council was keen to ensure the best way of using its resources to support children. He stated that there would be no redundancies as a result of the proposed changes. He welcomed the recommendations from the Somerset Parent Carer Forum and thought it would help inform the discussions with affected families in future weeks.

The Committee held a discussion on the report and reflected on many of the comments made by those members of the public. There were also other Councillors who spoke during the debate and they thought this process had been handled badly but were reassured that the approach would change and those families would be contacted individually so needs could be gauged.

The Committee, after a further brief discussion, agreed a number of recommendations following the discussion:

1. Endorse the importance of individual needs of every child and that the Council works closely with children, parents and schools to ensure individual needs are met;
2. The key priority must be to keep children in mainstream schools and improve outcomes;
3. If there is an identified skills gap, we need to ensure that staff are appropriately upskilled to meet need;
4. Provide the very best service with the resources available;

5. Progress is reported to the Committee in September.

**6 Pathways to Independence (P2i) - Agenda Item 8**

The Committee considered a report, received a presentation and heard from a young person who had experienced Pathways to Independence (P2i).

The Committee found the testimony of the young person very interesting and informative and her contribution was greeted with a round of applause.

There was a discussion of the report with answers to questions and further information being provided by other service providers.

The Committee agreed to accept the report and it was suggested and agreed that a further report be provided at a future meeting to report progress on the Improvement Plan.

The Committee agreed to accept the report.

**7 SEND Peer Review - Agenda Item 7**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this item to a future meeting.

**10 Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 9**

There were no other items of business and the Chair thanked all those present for attending and closed the meeting at 13:03.

**(The meeting ended at 1.03 pm)**

**CHAIRMAN**

