

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 18 May 2018 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chair), Mrs Eileen Tipper, Mr Richard Berry, Cllr A Bown, Ruth Hobbs, Cllr M Pullin, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr T Munt, Cllr W Wallace and Cllr R Williams (Vice-Chair)

Other Members present:

Apologies for absence: Cllr J Lock, Ms Helen Fenn, Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Cllr J Williams and Cllr N Taylor

81 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

In respect of agenda item 7 – Young Carers Update report – Cllr Pullin declared a personal interest as a Young Carers Trustee.
In respect of agenda item 9 – which included a brief verbal report on the Government’s call for evidence in respect of Elective Home Education – Ruth Hobbs declared a personal interest as a member of the Parent Carer Forum’s national committee on this topic.

82 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 20 April 2018 - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the last meeting held on 20 April 2018 were accepted, with a minor amendment, as being accurate and were signed by the Chair.

83 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were no members of the public present, and hence no questions asked, statements/comments made or petitions presented.

84 Scrutiny Work Programme - Agenda Item 5

The Committee Chair explained the reports that make up the work programme agenda item and the importance the Committee should attach to planning its future work.

The Committee then 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 tracker.

The Committee Chair then explained that the Committee regularly reviewed the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) and that it had 7 themes and he asked those present to familiarise themselves with the CYPP and to consider becoming a champion for one of the 7 themes.

85 West Somerset Opportunity Area - Agenda Item 6

The Committee began by considering the report that explained that the Opportunity Area programme had been introduced by the Education Secretary to improve social mobility and opportunities for young people. It was noted that Somerset had been ranked as last out of 324 areas on the social mobility index in both 2016 and 2017.

It was reported that Somerset had been chosen as one of 12 areas in England with poor social mobility and schools to share a total of up to £72million. The plan, published last October, by the Department for Education (DfE) would run until March 2020.

Consideration turned to the report and it was noted that the plan had 4 priority areas: Priority 1: Every child has a great start in life; Priority 2: Educational excellence in the classroom; Priority 3: Transition to adulthood; Priority 4: Skills for employment and business. A brief overview was provided on each priority and the identified metrics in those subjects that were helping to inform action and improvements.

The Committee considered and discussed the report and had the benefit of answers to questions from Jan Downie – DfE’s Head of Delivery for the West Somerset Opportunity Area. The Committee sought and received reassurance that the plan was achievable and progress was being appropriately monitored. It was confirmed that a WSOA Partnership Board met regularly and each of the 4 priority areas had a working group to ensure its individual action plan was being achieved.

The Committee requested that a further update report be brought to the October meeting. It was further requested that the next update report contain the following:

examples of achievements/progress made to date within each of the 4 priority areas;

examples of how funding had been allocated to initiatives and if this had been successful and/or how this could be used in other initiatives, as it was not clear in the current report format;

examples of how partnership working on the cross cutting themes had brought about improvements;

how could the WSOA be stretched to include the general prosperity and economic activity in the area;

ideas on how learning from the WSOA could be rolled out/shared for the benefit of all children and young people in other parts of Somerset.

86 **Young Carers Update report** - Agenda Item 7

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on progress of the Young Carers Steering Group following the recommendations made by the Committee’s Task and Finish Group in April 2017.

The Committee considered the report and progress against the identified plans contained in the Young Carers Strategic Action Plan (attached to the report as Appendix A). There was a thorough discussion of the report and progress made in ensuring the suggested changes had been embedded with Members making a number of suggestions for possible improvement.

It was noted that there was now a fast track option for young carers so support would not be delayed, and the assessment form for Adult Social Care would now include (as it had previously) a section about young carers to see if help/support might be needed. Regarding Schools it was stated that a programme of training had been written for Schools to help them identify Young Carers on roll.

On the subject of collecting data from Schools it was stated that some progress had been made and a question to identify Young Carers should be on School Data collection forms for the next academic year. There were low referrals from GP's and also Drug/Alcohol Services and it was noted that this might be due to few Early Help Assessment (EHA) forms being completed. Little information was being provided as those engaging with Adults did not seem to collect information to see if there were any children that needed help/support. An example of a child was provided that showed where information had been lost within the system which meant a young carer had not been identified by a School, despite the information being held within the 'system'.

Small team of 5.5 FTE worked with 300 young people each year and saw around 80% of those. The efforts of the team were praised and it was suggested that they share best practice with others and also try to link with School Governor's for support on data collection in Schools. The Young Adult Carers Pathway initiative was welcomed as the previous way of handing over to Adult Services had changed. The true figure of the number of Young Carers in Somerset remained unknown however it was hoped the revised School Data Collection Form would provide more comprehensive information.

The Committee accepted the report and requested that momentum be maintained to ensure improvements for Young Carers, who through their endeavours were estimated to save the Council millions of pounds each year, were delivered.

Members welcomed the projected further progress of the Action Plan and also suggested that:

- Further thought be given to some form of ID card for Young Carers;
- Each school in Somerset be encouraged to nominate a Young Carer Champion, to be a point of contact for Young Carers in that setting;
- Ensure that every School properly submit completed Data Collection forms of its pupils to aid identification of Young Carers;
- Approach GP Federations to address the issue of the low number of referrals to Young Carers Service;
- Consideration be given to help Young Carers to have access to the Department of Work and pensions and available benefits;
- Continuation of the 2 County Councillor Champions to help raise the profile for Young Carers in Somerset

87 Progress on Recommendations arising from the Ofsted Inspection Report, January 2018 - Agenda Item 8

The Committee considered this item which had been requested to provide an overview of how the Council was progressing the recommendations arising from the last Ofsted Inspection.

Overall Ofsted acknowledged significant improvements to services for vulnerable children, however it was noted that some areas were at the lower end of requires improvement and urgent work was required to consolidate and build on improvements. The report was supplemented with a thorough verbal overview and update on recent developments/progress.

It was explained that the Ofsted recommendations had been placed where it had been assessed there was the best professional fit within the CYPP and some of the recommendations would go across and involve the input/work of several areas/teams. This would therefore mean that the Committee would continue to receive quarterly updates on the CYPP and those would now include updates on the implementation of the Ofsted recommendations.

It was noted that there was a mentoring programme to support Year 2 social workers, so that social workers were not lost as they built up to a full caseload and the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme had helped.

There was a brief discussion of Appendix 1 and the deadlines for completion dates and also the BRAG rating. Members were interested to learn how best the Committee could support the work of how services could attain a position of achieving a 'Good' Ofsted inspection rating. It was noted that staffing was an issue, including not only caseloads but also initial recruitment and the Council was aware that it needed to do more to attract employees in different disciplines from a variety of areas.

The Committee asked if the Chair could be invited to QPRM meetings, as this practice of him being able to attend as an observer seemed to have lapsed. It was suggested, in addition to the regular CYPP reports, that a specific Ofsted update report be provided in 6 months so progress against the Ofsted recommendations could be reviewed.

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

The Chair invited the Lead Officer in respect of overseeing Elective Home Education to provide the Committee with an update an overview on this topic, including the current call for evidence instigated by the Department for Education (DfE).

Members were encouraged to engage in the consultation exercise and/or offer any comments/thoughts to Dave Farrow who would be collating a response on behalf of the Council. It was noted that the Council was currently aware of approx. 950 school age children being educated at home under the current voluntary registration scheme. 30% SEN compared to 2-3% of the whole school age population, and last year the whole EHE cohort fell in to the (not in employment, education, or training) NEET category.

The Government's consultation was focussing on 3 main areas: Registration – were the current arrangements appropriate;
Monitoring – of provision, Councils currently have no right to monitor;
Support – what should be made available to families and children that choose EHE.

It was agreed that the Council's draft response would be circulated at the beginning of June for any comments. It was requested that the link to the website was circulated to the Committee and the lead officer encouraged any Member to contact him with any questions.

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/home-education-call-for-evidence-and-revised-dfe-a/>

There were no other items of business and the Chair thanked all those present for attending and closed the meeting at 13:15.

(The meeting ended at 12.48 pm)

CHAIRMAN