

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 14 September 2018 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr R Williams (Vice-Chair), Cllr P Clayton (Substitute), Cllr M Dimmery, Cllr J Lock, Cllr M Keating (Substitute), Cllr W Wallace, Cllr J Williams, Mr P Elliott, Mrs R Hobbs and Mrs E Tipper.

Other Members present: Cllr T Munt, Cllr F Nicholson, Cllr H Davies, Cllr M Chilcott

Apologies for absence: Cllr W Wallace, Cllr James Hunt (substituted by Cllr P Clayton), Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, and Cllr G Fraschini (who is being substituted by Cllr M Keating).

9 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

Eileen Tipper declared an interest as a trustee of the Community Council for Somerset. Ruth Hobbs declared an interest as she had a new role as the Children's specialist adviser for the Health Watch Board. Cllr R Williams declared an interest as a governor for Musgrove Park Hospital.

10 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 20 July 2018 - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the last meeting held on 20 July 2018 were accepted as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

11 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There was one public question from Alison Douthwaite which was read out by Beverley Lister regarding item 6 changes to the physical impairment and medical support team. She asked about a clearly defined threshold for PIMS involvement, the amount of children needing to move to specialist provision due to no further support in mainstream settings and for clarity regarding one-off involvement referred to in the report.

Assistant Director for Quality and Assurance Annette Perrington said she would provide a written response. The threshold for support would be defined going forward. The Council was committed to enabling access to mainstream education where possible. Audits were being organised to ensure schools were meeting their needs.

The Chair asked that Mrs Lister raise any further concerns about this outside of the meeting where more information could be discussed.

12 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.

There was a lengthy debate regarding proposals for young careers and it was highlighted that these had now been withdrawn and would be looked at again so there would be time for the Scrutiny Committee to look at have its say. It was agreed it would be helpful to liaise with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee so they could be involved.

Members were informed that proposals affecting schools would be put before the schools forum for consultation. There was assurance sought that there could be scrutiny of the proposals for the reductions of services to support vulnerable pupils to ensure consultation would be carried out effectively and to look at the impact.

It was agreed that the following items would be included on the work programme:

- An update on new academies in Somerset
- Analysis of GCSEs results including for Children Looked After for the February meeting.
- Implementation of the decisions regarding Children and Families taken at the Cabinet meeting to be scrutinised at the October meeting
- Proposals for changes to services regarding Children and Families in section C2b agreed at the Cabinet meeting brought to the October meeting to discuss consultation and scrutinise plan.

13 **Changes to the Physical Impairment and Medical Support Team (PIMS) - Agenda Item 6**

The Committee **considered** this report that provided an update on the implementation of changes to the PIMs team, plans for further engagement on future service delivery and the impact on children and families.

The Council is committed to inclusion in mainstream schools for pupils with physical and medical impairments and has a range of information and advice which can support children with SEND in mainstream schools.

On reviewing the caseload of the PIMS team, it was found that 202 (43%) of the reported caseload did not require any further direct support. This means that schools are able to meet the needs of these pupils with their existing school-based support. The caseload lists were therefore revised.

There had been consultation with parents and engagement events with discussions on how the new service would look. Parents had been fully engaged with this. Work was being undertaken to look at jointly funding services. Parents with any concerns had been offered individual meetings.

There was a move towards personalisation to ensure those who need the

service received it rather than there being a blanket approach. For the more complex cases support had been increased.

Scrutiny requested that no changes be implemented until further engagement with parents. In total the changes to staffing in the PIMs team is as follows: Reduction of 0.5 FTE advisory teachers from 3.3 in April 2018 to 2.8 in September 2018, a reduction of 15%, significantly less than the closing of cases with no active involvement of 43%.

Five engagement events are planned for September. These events will include families of children and young people with hearing, vision, or physical and medical impairments. The focus will be on service design and delivery to co-produce an offer which will ensure the needs of the learners are met while efficiencies are also realised. Somerset Parent Carer forum will be involved in these sessions, as well as National Deaf Children's Society, and advisory teachers from the three teams.

Members were informed that when engagement was concluded there would be a further update about this to the committee.

Members were asked to bear in mind the service offers of other similar local authorities. Research into the offer for PIMS or equivalent teams from other local authorities has evidenced that, where provided, PIMS-type services are jointly commissioned and funded by Children's Services and the CCG. The models at Liverpool, Cornwall and Derbyshire were particularly highlighted.

Ms Perrington was in charge of the service and she informed the committee she was confident it was moving in the right direction.

The Committee **noted** the report and noted that attention has been focused on ensuring the whilst the changes have been implemented that the Council has worked closely with children, parents and schools to ensure individual needs were met.

14 **Children and Young People's Plan 2016-19 - Agenda Item 7**

The Committee 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.

Two of the 7 Improvement Programmes (Programme 1 and 5) rate their progress as GREEN evidencing confidence that they will be able to complete their Year 3 actions by March 2019, however Programme's 2,3,4, 6 and 7 have rated their Year 3 Quarter 1 status as AMBER which may reflect timescales leading to completing actions rather than a lack of confidence in their ability to complete.

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.

There was some discussion around explanation needed where there were red arrows to explain where there was or was not concern. Feedback was still awaited on programmes 3 and 6 and it was suggested that this be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

It was also noted that smoking in pregnancy was going down in the county and work was ongoing to get better health inputs on health care plans.

Some other points raised included accessing parenting toolkits, whether there was a shift towards vaping in pregnant women who smoked, capacity of health visitors who were unable to pick up more work and the draft plan for Children's Mental Health was currently being reviewed and could be reported back at this committee when that was completed.

There was also discussion about increases in exclusions and new legal challenges and Early Year Health Care Plans being completed within the agreed timeframe, recruitment and retention of social workers and the impact of the current financial situation on this. The reasons for leaving these posts were now being built into future action plans for tackling this area.

The Committee **noted** the update.

15 **Children's Social Care Statutory Customer Feedback Report 2017-2018-**
Agenda item 8

The Committee considered this item which reports on the operation of the complaints procedure containing an executive summary followed by 3 separate detailed sections for Children's Services, Adult Services, and Economy and Community Infrastructure (ECI).

The Annual report includes; the number of complaints at each stage of the process, a summary of the annual review data provided to the Council by the Local Government Ombudsman, timescale and outcomes of complaints; which customer groups made complaints; learning and service improvements and a summary equality monitoring data. In addition to this, the annual report contains a summary of the compliments and comments received by the service.

Members were referred to page 13 of the report which listed detailed data for Children's Services. A total of 459 complaints about children's services were received in 2017/18. The table at 2.2 of the report showed the in-year resolution status of those complaints.

The vast majority of complaints resolved in year continue to be resolved at stage 1 of the complaints process. Of the 120 children's services complaints that were upheld or partly upheld in 2017/18, 88 related to children's social care and 32 to other children's services.

Further discussion include that officers were learning from complaints raised, accessibility for vulnerable people to make complaints, concern about the length of dealing with some complaints e.g. Regarding learning disability services. This was largely due to issues where they were hugely complex. There was formal advocacy in place to help vulnerable people and signposting for this service would be checked to ensure it was adequate.

Members were also concerned about vexatious complainants and the amount of time it took to deal with these. There was also a question regarding the increase in complaints involving policies and procedures and whether this was due to people not following them or not understanding them. The Committee were informed that this detail could be looked into and reported back.

The Committee **noted** the report.

16 **Somerset Health and Care Strategy Update**

The Committee then considered a report regarding the development of the Somerset Health and Care Strategy jointly led by Somerset County Council and Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group.

Members were assured this would have a strong patient public voice and emerging proposals were around 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. These emerging proposals will be further developed during September and early October, and a decision will be made which proposals need to be part of a public consultation.

Key concerns included workforce problems across the board with staff shortages and significant financial constraints in health care, to ensure the voice of the child was included.

A workshop was being organised to look at the proposals in more detail with invitations to be sent to the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Members from this committee could also be invited.

The Committee **noted** the report.

8 **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 13:22.

(The meeting ended at 13.22)

CHAIR