

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee held in the Library Meeting Room, Taunton Library, on Friday 13 September 2019 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr M Dimery, Cllr James Hunt, Cllr J Lock, Cllr W Wallace, Cllr J Williams and Mrs Eileen Tipper.

Other Members present: Cllr Revans, Cllr Chilcott, Cllr Lawrence, Cllr Munt, Cllr Nicholson, Cllr Purbrick.

Apologies for absence: Cllr R Williams, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper.
Mr P Elliott, Ms Helen Fenn and Mrs Ruth Hobbs.

1 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

There were no declarations made.

2 Minutes from the previous meeting - Agenda Item 3

The Scrutiny Manager explained that he had mislaid the minutes from the last meeting, and these would be presented to a future meeting.

3 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There was a member of the public present but there were no question asked, statements made or petitions presented.

4 Scrutiny Work Programme - Agenda Item 5

The Chair directed the Committee's attention to the Council's forward plan of proposed key decisions, and it was noted that several decisions earmarked for 1 November appeared to be dependent on 'European' funding and sought reassurance. The Director of Children's Services stated that regardless of the status of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, known as 'Brexit', the Government had committed to matching European funding.

On the topic of 'Brexit' it was asked if the Committee could receive a report outlining the Council's preparedness/plans. The Scrutiny Manager noted that any overall Brexit plan would be best considered by the Policies and Place Scrutiny Committee and he undertook to flag this with a recently created 'Brexit' team. It was requested that a report with a Children and Families aspect regarding contingencies to manage 'Brexit' be brought to a future meeting.

The Chair noted that on the Committee's forward plan a number of items had been suggested that would lend themselves to discussion by a joint meeting with the Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Manager undertook to discuss this with the Chair of that Committee. It was also suggested that members of the Health and Well-being Board be invited, once arrangements had been finalised.

The Scrutiny Manager informed the Committee that he had followed up a request regarding a future agenda item on 'Safe routes to school'. He reflected several items had been highlighted by relevant Officers and the Committee agreed that the Chair, Vice Chair and Scrutiny Manager meet to determine the specific aspects to be considered.

The refreshed outcome tracker was noted and accepted.

5 **Early Help Strategic Commissioning Board Update** - Agenda Item 6

The Chair welcomed Louise Palmer & Angela Gascoigne to the meeting, and they began by providing an overview of the Early Help Board, noting the 5 key areas of activity that had been approved by the Cabinet last February. Those key areas were designed to develop and improve the early help offer in Somerset:

- Improve the support and interventions for children with some additional needs – level 2;
- Strengthening Early Help infrastructure with partners and redesigning the early help 'front door';
- Strengthening community capacity and capability;
- Improve the support and interventions for children with complex needs – level 3;
- Strengthen the multi-agency strategic approach to early help in Somerset.

They provided a brief presentation to supplement their report and stated that early help should not just be regarded as a service but also be established and recognised as a way of working. The previous tiered approach of top down delivery would no longer work, and it would now be the case that several different agencies would work together to deliver services for families.

Current work was focusing on how best to capture data and information to identify where help and support was required, and some delivery models were based in a similar way to those used successfully in the get-set service. The importance of identifying what was needed and how best to respond to those needs was recognised, along with the subsequent transition to enable things to be put in place in place, which could involve restorative practice and deepening dialogue between organisations.

The Committee heard some examples of different types of work in communities that had helped to bring about a positive change. The Chair of the Committee thanked both Officers for the interesting insight in to early help and reflected that the examples of the case studies were heartening to hear as they had provided local examples of improved outcomes.

During the discussion of the report and presentation, issues/concerns were raised, questions asked/answered and further information was provided on:

- Membership of Board, were any other 'Health' providers other than the NHS trust involved? It was noted there were no other Health representatives, but all/more would be welcome to become involved;
- There was a question about provision in the northeast area of the County, and it was noted that the new safeguarding arrangements would feed in to health arrangement and there was a co-ordinated approach to ensure sufficient provision in every area;
- It was asked how Officers knew interventions had been successful and if so, how could they be built on and improved/sustained. In response it was acknowledged that it had been a challenge to gather feedback from each intervention, and for that information to be collect in a consistent, disciplined and useful way but improvements had been made in that regard;
- Regarding the proposed digitising of the assessment process, it was suggested that lessons be learnt from similar programmes to help ensure that the process of change ran smoothly most importantly for the benefit of service users;
- Work was ongoing to link up data and knowledge including the speedy and secure dissemination of information and it was acknowledged that improvement probably would not progress in a linear way, and progress would depend on linked changes being made across organisations, and people taking personal responsibility;
- It was suggested that Governor Services be contacted to include some Governor training and raise awareness about Early Help;
- It was noted that it was important, in an era of limited resource, to avoid duplication of effort and making the right interventions would be key as would getting people to recognised performance;
- It was asked if the work would continue with the young person to the adult stage and it was noted that there were people from adult services involved and Officers were keen to create and build existing links;
- It was noted that Level 3 support was working well, and it was stated that it had been and would continue to be a priority area, and this would include having regard to the voice of young people as had been evidenced during the CYPP refresh;
- There was a discussion about improving ways to contact people and allow them to access services and it was explained that work on designing 'the front door' to ensure a friendly triage service initially would help this at the same time as improving the skill set and ongoing development of the work force;
- It was noted that the Family Forum in Minehead had been an excellent example of collaborative local work, and it was suggested that it be copied in other areas of the County.

The Chair summed up the discussion and noted that the Committee would endorse the call for better collaboration and support for transforming data capture and analysis to cope multi agency intervention. He encouraged Members, particularly those who were District Councillors, to help work in District Councils and to attend connection events.

The Chair also requested that Officers look in to arranging an appropriate visit for the Committee and that an update report be presented in 6 months.

6 **Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 7**

After ascertaining there were no other items of business, the Chair thanked all those present for attending, and closed the meeting at 11.00am.

(The meeting ended at 11.00 am)

CHAIRMAN