

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 December 2019 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr R Williams (Vice-Chair), Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Cllr James Hunt, Cllr W Wallace, Cllr J Williams, Cllr A Dance (Substitute) and Cllr L Leyshon (Substitute) and Mrs Ruth Hobbs, Mrs Eileen Tipper.

Other Members present:

Apologies for absence: Cllr M Dimery, Cllr J Lock, Mr Elliot and Ms Helen Fenn.

23 **Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 2

24 **Minutes from the previous meeting** - Agenda Item 3

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November were acceptable and signed by the Chairman.

25 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 4

The Chair of the Committee invited Mrs Adlam, Chair and Trustee of the Friends of Somerset Young Carers, to speak.

She noted that the Friends Charity have several concerns regarding the on-going provision of support for Young carers going forwards and have the following comments regarding the briefing paper submitted to this committee by Louise Fowler.

1. Budget differences- on the first page 1.3 b- the sum of £53k is stated as the Grant to young carers groups in Somerset but page 3 item 3.7 the actual figure given is £49564 a significant amount less. After successfully winning the Tender YMCA were then told they had to meet travel costs which I understand is putting their budgets under significant pressure. Further to this the Friends charity have received Grant Applications from Mendip YMCA for the Mendip Seniors & Junior Groups as well as South Somerset Seniors / Junior Groups - in this Application YMCA are asking our little charity to fund session costs for food, art materials etc- the Trustees and Committee have rejected this Grant Application as they feel this is core provision and the costs should be covered by YMCA from their original Tender Application to SCC

2. Numbers attending and referrals - the number of YCs attending Groups is much lower than under the old SCC project- we had been told that Referrals were going to be Open- i.e. anyone could refer, even self-refer; but then I understand that referrals are going through Team 8 which is delaying referral.

3. Another issue is that YMCA are only funded to run the Groups whilst some parents and Children are expecting help/ support outside of the Groups - YMCA do not have the remit to provide this support whilst Team 8 are involved with the higher need families and children- so there are many children/ families who are not receiving support as they are not high enough need, so things escalate until crisis point is reached- early interventions work but under the

current provision these opportunities are missed- leading to escalation and crisis which cost everyone more in the long term.

4. Schools- 144 children identified but then what happens- referral to YMCA for groups or Team 8 if needed? or if the children want or need neither provision but would benefit from low level support where is the provision?

5. Bath Phil- under additional opportunities- this is presented in this report as a definite event/ piece of support that is going to happen- it is not. Jason Thornton has contacted the FoSYCP charity regarding additional funding for staff and travel costs - (a sum of approx. £12 K) to enable this event to take place as there will need to be 6 days of workshops/ development of the music etc which will be presented at the Glastonbury Festival or similar launch event. FoSYCP do not have the resources to fund this on their own and as I understand it neither do YMCA have any spare cash to fund this either.

It seems that the Council have the illusion that there are reserves in other organisations that are available to fund the basic provision for young carers in Somerset- there is not – so does this mean that at the end of the current academic year the young carers who save the Council so much money through carrying out their caring duties are left high and dry again?

The constant uncertainty is affecting our fund-raising activities as Donors are put off, thinking provision is under constant threat-all the organisations currently supporting young carers need an undertaking from the Council of a plan for the future.

My question to this committee is what does the Council really want at the end of this academic year? Or is the Council just going to step aside and try to blame YMCA / others for the failure to provide support for young carers in the County?

The Chair of the Committee thanked Mrs Adlam for taking the time to attend the meeting and make her points and asked the lead Officer for Young Carers to address the points made when presenting the report for agenda item 6.

26 **Scrutiny Work Programme - Agenda Item 5**

The Chair of the Committee invited Members to consider the Cabinet's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions in forthcoming months and suggest any items for the Committee to consider. The plan was noted.

The Chair directed attention to the Committee's own work programme and invited suggestions for possible future agenda items. It was requested that an update report be provided on Elective Home Education.

It was noted that the Outcome Tracker had been refreshed and updated and this was accepted.

27 **Young Carers Update report - Agenda Item 6**

The Committee considered this report that provided an update on the support arrangements for Young Carers since the Cabinet agreed a different approach last May. The new vision was explained to provide better identification of and better support and engagement for young carers across Somerset.

It was noted that the new approach had comprised 3 components, with each being funded, initially, by the Council and an update was provided:

- a) Complex needs: £120,000 allocated to assess and support young carers with more complex needs – facilitated via Team 8 and the Early Help Assessment tool;
- b) Grant Funding for Young Carers Groups: £53,000 annual grant fund for the facilitation of young carers support groups throughout Somerset. Managed initially by Children’s Commissioning and Team 8, and involving young carers in decision making to award grants;
- c) Community Alliance: £75,000 to develop a ‘community alliance’ which would build local capacity to support young carers, especially those who may otherwise be hidden. A meeting was planned, to include working with external organisations/enterprises to maximise social value, with a view to securing additional funding from other sources.

It was noted that the investment of £120k had enabled all staff in Team 8 to have the skills and knowledge to work with young carers with complex needs. Team 8 would be restructuring into the Family Intervention Team (FIS) next January, and this would extend the team’s reach and capacity, enabling young carers to receive a service at evenings and weekends.

There was a brief discussion about the Community Alliance, and it was reported that its purpose would be to increase identification and support to ensure more young carers had a range of support to choose from, with organisations outside the Council. A meeting had been arranged the end of January with a range of interested stakeholders to discuss how best to take this work forward. It was envisaged that a grant funding process would begin in the Spring to identify a range of voluntary sector organisations who would be able to offer relevant and different ways of identifying and supporting young carers. The grant process would require successful organisations to work together, so that best practice would be shared.

In response to a question it was stated that Young Carer attendance at the youth clubs from last September to October 2019 had remained stable compared to participation in the groups before the Cabinet decision. Overall this meant that attendance at the youth clubs represented 37% of the young carers with an allocated Team 8 worker.

It was noted that a recent school survey had included a section asking schools to report numbers of young carers and 50% of schools had responded. Those schools had reported 144 young carers in total who had not previously been known to the Council. This data would be analysed so that schools were supported by relevant services, to ensure young carers were getting the right help.

The Chair reflected on the discussion and he noted that the Committee would be interested to see how the Community Alliance plans progressed and how schools could be better enabled so that young carers could be supported. Appropriately. He suggested and it was agreed for a further update to be provided next July, to report on the first 12 months of the new arrangements.

28 **2019/2020 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report - Month 6 (Quarter 2) - Agenda Item 7**

The Committee considered this report that set out the Quarter 2 (month 6) forecast outturn position for 2019/20 for the net Revenue Budget of £327.967m. It also highlighted variances to service budgets, as well as emerging issues, risks, areas of concern and proposed actions to resolve them.

An overview of the overall financial position was provided, and it was noted that although uncertainties remained the Council's underlying position had improved over the last year. It was noted that Children's Services were reporting an adverse variance within their budget of £1.768m which was an adverse movement of £1.149m from month 5. Also, it was reported that external placements projections had increased by £0.933m resulting in a total projected overspend of £2.056m, the increase was due to 11 children changing placement during the last month.

There was a brief discussion about the costs associated with transporting children to school and it was noted these were projected to increase by £0.196m. This was due to a reduction of £0.304m in Home to School transport costs and an increase of £0.500m in SEND transport. In response to a question it was explained the reduction in Home to School costs were a result of specific market disruption activity, including a project called The Big Bus, an inhouse fleet that offered several routes to offset costs of additional children travelling.

Members noted that a Somerset School had become a sponsored academy (joining a multi academy trust following an inadequate Ofsted inspection). At the point of transfer the school had been in deficit and this would remain with the Council, to be funded from the core budget. Unfortunately, this was not an allowable charge to the Dedicated Schools Grant and the school's deficit was currently estimated at £0.450m, Members thought this an unfair process.

The Deputy Leader of Council stated the Council was evidencing a sustained tighter financial grip going forwards through the budget monitoring forecast and its approach to MTFP for 2020-2023. To further support this there would be a continuation of formal monthly monitoring reports to Cabinet and to Place Scrutiny. Alongside this internal tracking and budget monitoring processes continue to be given close attention by the Council's leadership team.

It was noted that the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (2019-22), to be considered at the January 2020 meeting, would set out proposals to further develop the Council's financial resilience over the long-term whilst also supporting the delivery of Somerset's key priorities. The report was accepted.

29 **Children's Services Performance Report Quarter 2 - 2019/2020 - Agenda Item 8**

The Committee considered this report for the first time which provided details of the key measures included in the corporate performance report that related to Children's Services. It set out the key activities and measures used to check performance for the year against the identified priorities. It was noted that the

report did not contain details of all the other activities that together contributed to what helped make a difference to children in Somerset.

The report included key performance indicators (KPIs), to show how progress was assessed against targets and project updates. Performance was shown using performance ratings (based on the RAG ratings) and progress was shown in terms of direction of performance (DOP) through the use of arrows.

Details was provided in 6 areas with KPI's with a commentary note to set out the areas of success, areas of concern and a focus on the next quarter.

Embed an Effective Multiagency Early Help Offer in Somerset;
Improved Multi Agency Children's Safeguarding;
Improve the Outcomes for Looked After Children;
Improve Outcomes for Vulnerable Learners;
Ensure Effective Workforce Capacity is in Place Across Children's Services;
Embedding a Learning Culture in Children's Social Care.

There was a brief discussion of the report and Members sought reassurance that there was a trail of what produces what, so that the difference between input and activity could be demonstrated. It was noted that the Committee had previously received updates about progress made in delivering the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and if these reports would complement or replace the CYPP updates. The Director of Children's Services stated the Council was moving to an integrated approach to data management and these reports would provide the Committee with an on-going high-level summary which could allow them to obtain more details if required.

There were questions about tolerance and success with regards to how those levels and measures would be reflected in future reports. The Chair suggested and it was agreed that the Committee give consideration to allocating a Member Champion for each of the 6 key activity areas.

30 **Update on the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Well-being** - Agenda Item 9

The Chair invited the Children and Young People's (CYP) Improvement Lead from the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to introduce the report and he began providing an overview of the improvements made in the previous plan in recent years.

The report also provided a commentary on the development of a new Strategy for Children and Young People's Mental Health 2020-2024 which would be drafted and the consulted on in early in the new year.

The Committee heard that a key aim was to address the gaps in preventative and early intervention mental health support for CYP and their families; expand capacity of voluntary community and primary care sector. Over the previous 18 months, there had been significant improvements in the mental health services available for the children and young people of Somerset.

It was noted that these had been facilitated, in part, through increased investment from NHS England as part of the Future in Mind and Five Year

Forward View policy directives (since 2015). A new NHS Long Term Plan had made a commitment to further investment for mental health services to improve access, waiting times, realisation of digital options, changing the culture and personalisation. Also, there would be a sustained focus on reducing incidences of self-injury, improving pathway for eating disorders and the importance of prevention and early intervention.

In response to a question it was acknowledged that previously, there had been significant issues in CAMHS/Paediatric services in terms of waiting lists for Tier 3 community CAMHS, and undue discharge delays for young people with mental health problems on Paediatric Wards. There had also been higher than average self-harm prevalence presenting at Acute Hospitals and historic cases of child suicides, which had prompted comprehensive and deep-dive analysis by the Director of Public Health into Self Harm.

Members noted that a combination of development of the Somerset Wellbeing Framework, strengthening in CAMHS operational processes, the establishment of Single Point of Access, increased investment in CAMHS, schools mental health and resilience work (SHARE) had all helped to improve support for schools, primary care, young people and families in the County. It was also reported that there had been no child suicides over last 24 months.

To aid accessibility known as service pathway improvements, there were plans to implement a comprehensive range of digital infrastructure to aid accessibility, transparency, and timeliness of support through co-production/ co-design and meaningful participation with young people, families and key stakeholders. It would be important to continue this work against a backdrop of increasing requests for support / referrals, combined with the lack of prevention and early intervention services at universal and community level is proving a system challenge for schools, hospitals, GPs, social care, mental health services, young people, families and voluntary/community services.

There was a discussion about the development of the improvement and transformation programmes and the importance of keeping clearly defined and separate the strategies and plans. The report was accepted and it was suggested and agreed that a further update be provided in the Spring.

31 Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 10

The Chair, after ascertaining there were no other items of business, thanked all those present for attending and wished everyone a merry Christmas and a happy New Year and closed the meeting at 12.31pm.

(The meeting ended at 12.31 pm)

CHAIRMAN