

Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

Chairman: Cllr Leigh Redman

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer and Author: Jamie Jackson – Governance Manager - Scrutiny

Contact Details: 01823 359040 jajackson@somerset.gov.uk

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Scrutiny for Policies Children and Families Committee is required by the Constitution to make an annual report to the Council and to provide each other meeting of the Council with a summary progress report and outcomes of scrutiny. This report covers the work of the Committee's meeting on 17 May and 14 June 2019.
- 1.2. We continue to focus, on the outcomes arising from the Ofsted Inspection, and on ensuring the delivery of the new Children and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP). The Vice-Chair worked closely with Officers on the 4 priority themes of the CYPP: Supported families; Healthy Lives; A Great Education; Positive Activities.
- 1.3. Our predecessor Committee (from 2015 to 2017) was able to help bring about continuing progress in many areas of the Council's improvement agenda for children and young people and our central focus will also be to constantly ask - **What impact does that have on children in Somerset?**
- 1.4. The Committee has 8 elected Members. We also have 7 co-opted members. We have 2 Church representative vacancies along with 1 Parent Governor vacancies and we are looking at ways to ensure those positions are occupied. We have retained our Schools Compact representative and a representative from the Schools Forum; our co-opted members have voting rights on education matters only. We look forward to once again hearing first hand testimony from front line staff who will we invite to attend and participate at our meetings.
- 1.5. Members of the Council are reminded that:
 - all Members are invited to attend meetings of all the Council's Scrutiny Committees and to contribute freely on any agenda item;
 - any Member could propose a topic for inclusion on the Scrutiny Work Programmes;
 - any Member can be asked by the Committee to contribute information and evidence, and to participate in specific scrutiny reviews.

2. Background

2.1. Scrutiny Work Programme – As noted above we outlined the importance for the Committee to focus on all aspects of the four new priorities of the revised Children and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP) and we agreed that our work programme should be developed through discussions with the Committee Chair, Vice-Chair, Director of Children’s Services and relevant Cabinet Members.

Each of our future meetings will have specific agenda items to consider the work programme and this will allow members and officers to suggest items we should scrutinise in more depth. We are also very keen to enhance our ability to monitor our suggested outcomes and recommended actions to ensure these have been progressed, and to assist us in this we will continue to review our outcome tracker at every meeting to ensure this is meaningful.

The Committee is also keen to help facilitate and progress the on-going Scrutiny Review, so we can continue to build on our role in policy shaping, holding the Cabinet to account and reviewing issues of importance to local communities.

2.2. 17 May 2019

SENS Update – A report from the Assistant Director provided an update on actions and progress to address the findings of the SEND Peer review from May 2017. It was noted that since the Peer review the inspection framework had not changed, although the SEND inspections had changed, and the recommendations from the 2017 review had switched to a new action plan. We noted that the next development phase of the strategy, had incorporated the newly refreshed Children and Young People’s Plan so SEND would continue to be an integral part of that plan. The 5 outcomes of the 2016 -2019 SEND Strategy were noted as were the 6 strategic programmes of the Local Area Improvement Network (LAIN). We accepted the update and welcomed the offer of a ‘SEND workshop’ and a Q&A session at our July meeting and we were encouraged to think about possible questions, and areas we would like to discuss in more detail.

Children and Young People's Plan 2016-2019 – We then considered a report and received a presentation to evaluate success of the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) that had run from 2016 to 2019. We heard that the CYPP had assisted in improving partnership working amongst different public sector agencies in Somerset and there were now a range of multi-agency roadshows, with partners including those from the voluntary sector. The Team Around the School (TAS) model showed development and progress made, as had the changed structure of Parent and Family Support Advisors (PFSA). We thanked the Officer for the report and noted that Members had closely followed the progress of the original CYPP and we were greatly looking forward to future reports and monitoring progress of the new CYPP and helping to achieve success with the new 4 new priorities.

Governor Services Update – Members received a presentation from the Service Manager for Governance Services in Support Services for Education (SSE). It was explained that Governance in all its guises linked to the key priorities and outcomes within the new Children and Young People’s Plan for the Council’s Vision, “that Somerset children and young people are safe, healthy, happy, are ambitious for their future and develop skills for life.” Schools and their governance were key to making sure that the Vision was achieved. We thanked the Lead Officer for her presentation and requested that an advert be circulated amongst all serving Governors to highlight the Committee’s vacant Parent Governor post. The wonderful contribution of all Governors across Somerset was welcomed and we would encourage all fellow Members to participate and become involved.

Elective Home Education Update – Next we received a report and a supporting presentation from the Strategic Manager for Access and Additional Learning Needs that explained that on 2 April 2019, the Department for Education (DfE) had published updated guidance relating to Elective Home Education (EHE). We heard that the current DfE consultation, which would be open for feedback and responses until 24 June 2019 was seeking views on placing: A duty on local authorities to maintain a register; A duty on parents to supply information for the register; A duty on certain settings to supply information; and a duty on local authorities to provide support for home education. We discussed this topic thoroughly and regarding validating the EHE provided, it was explained that there was no requirement for the Council to know what exams children were doing, but that the EHE provided must be full time and ‘suitable and sufficient’, and that measuring progress was not just about outcomes. We accepted the report and thanked Officers for the informative and interesting presentation.

Somerset Children's Trust – Our final agenda item of a full agenda was a report which explained that the 3 Somerset Safeguarding Partners (the Police, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Council) were required to publish new safeguarding arrangements for children. The new arrangements, to be published by 29 June 2019, would become operational by 30 September 2019, and replace the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board. We heard that it was being proposed to integrate the Somerset Children’s Trust with the new Safeguarding Partnership arrangements, using measures within the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and existing flexibility of the Children’s Trust. It was reported that the Cabinet had given approval for the 3 partners to amalgamate the Children’s Trust Board Executive & Board with the current Somerset Safeguarding Board governance group and wider Board from October 2019. Although welcoming the report as it provided insight in to the future changes, we expressed frustration that greater detail had not provided. We agreed to request a further report at our next meeting to include details on: the future framework and detail particularly regarding scrutiny; how the voice of the child would be heard; assurances concerning the new governance arrangements; and how risk would be managed.

2.3. 14 June 2019

Public Question Time – We heard 2 questions from Mr Nigel Behan, of the UNITE Trade Union, about agenda item 6 Family Support Service update and the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing responded.

Family Support Service (FSS) Update – We requested an update on the progress of this phase of change for Public Health (PH) nurses within the Family Support Service, since the Cabinet approval in February 2018 and subsequent decisions regarding Council early help services in September 2018 and February 2019. We were reminded that the key objectives for the first 12 months following the transition had been: Compliance with Care Quality Commission regulated standards; Integration of all Operational Teams in Public Health; Joint planning with Public Health Commissioners to transform services to meet service specification; Compliance with key performance indicators; Workforce development supported by the Council; Contribute to the Fit for Our Future strategy by developing locality working to support children and families, across the health and care system. Officers wished to publicly acknowledge the continued support and cooperation of all staff, including new and previous employers who had all been very helpful both before and after the changes. We thanked Officers for the overview and the update was accepted.

Self-Harm Update – We considered this report that provided an update following the submission last December of the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2018 on Emotional Health and Wellbeing entitled 'Looking through the Lens of Self-Harm'. The report had looked at the issue of emotional resilience and had investigated emergency hospital admissions for self-harm. We noted that many of such admissions were single occurrence events, typically following an attempted paracetamol overdose. A key aim was to promote emotional resilience in young people and reduce the stigma associated of asking for help, as it was reported that 77% of young people did not know who to approach. The service was aiming to provide the right information, advice and guidance to help service users help themselves and target support to those who need it most. We thanked Officers for the update and congratulated them on the news they had recently won an award through the Faculty of Public Health. He reiterated that it was important for all Members to raise awareness of mental health issues and that it was OK not to be OK. It was requested that weblinks be sent to Members for the 'Life Hacks' training.

Proposals to implement the new Somerset Safeguarding Children

Partnership arrangements – We considered this report, requested at the last meeting, to provide an update on the progress towards the new safeguarding children arrangements to be known as the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership, replacing the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board. We heard that the Safeguarding Partners were exploring the possibility of a system for regional partners (outside Somerset but within the Avon and Somerset

Constabulary area) to scrutinise the local Somerset arrangements. Regional opportunities for independent scrutiny would become clearer over the next few months e.g. peer reviews, and external challenge. Regarding possible scrutiny arrangements it was noted that terms of reference for any regional activity would need to be developed to ensure that collective resources were maximised to ensure an effective and efficient process. It was thought most scrutiny would be provided locally at the start of the new arrangements. We agreed that the Committee should be involved with any joint scrutiny of the partnership and be given time to consider how this might be best achieved, including the effectiveness/purpose of visits to 'front line' areas. Our Chair and Vice Chair undertook to meet with the DCS and Portfolio holder outside of the meeting to discuss the issues further and establish clarity.

3. Consultations undertaken

- 3.1.** The Committee invites all Councillors to attend and contribute to its meetings. The Committee Chair and Vice Chair invite prospective report authors to attend their pre-meetings and Lead Officers are engaged in this process and reports are being submitted on time.

4. Implications

- 4.1.** The Committee carefully considers reports, and often asks for further information about the implications as outlined in the reports considered at its meetings. For further details of the reports considered by the Committee please contact the author of this report.

5. Background papers

- 5.1.** Further information about the Committee including dates of meetings in the new quadrennium, and agendas & reports from previous meetings are available via the Council's website.

www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.