

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 Wednesday 1 December 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr R Williams (Vice-Chair), Cllr M Dimery, Cllr James Hunt, Cllr B Revans, Cllr W Wallace and Cllr J Williams
The Revd T Osmond and E Tipper – co-opted members

Other Members present: Cllr F Nicholson

Other members attending virtually: Cllr C Paul and Cllr S Coles

Apologies for absence: Cllr L Vijeh and R Hobbs (co-opted member)

1 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

There were no new declarations of interest made at the meeting.

2 Minutes from the previous meeting held on Monday 8 November 2021 - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 8 November 2021 were signed and approved as a correct record.

3 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were no questions submitted by members of the public.

4 Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee Work Programme - Agenda Item 5

The Committee considered and noted the work programme and outcome tracker and the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions in the forthcoming months, including Cabinet meetings.

It was agreed that: -

- The Governance Specialist liaise with the Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee regarding the scheduling / prioritisation of the joint workshop items detailed in the work plan.
- The Chair asked that the Adoption Medicals item (lessons learnt) be brought to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.
- The following 'Items for information' will now be items on the agenda for the next meeting of the Committee - (a) Scrutiny review update; (b) Progress on Actions from Joint Workshop in October 2020 – Transition arrangements preparing for adulthood.

That the Committee's work programme and outcome tracker be updated, as discussed at the meeting.

5 **Progress update on the Written Statement of Action** - Agenda Item 8

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director, Inclusion, Dr Rob Hart, who presented a progress update on the Written Statement of Action (WSOA). The Committee had received the following documents with the agenda papers for the meeting: -

- Written Statement of Action Progress Report that was shared with DfE and NHSE advisors in September 2021;
- Some short summary slides showing the most recent progress update to the SEND Improvement Board in November 2021; and
- The original Written Statement of Action (for context/ background)

Dr Hart covered the following in the presentation - background to the WSoA and what trying to achieve; how the WSoA is being implemented and monitoring; the difference being made, successes and impact; the risks and challenges; and priorities for the next 12 months.

The Committee asked detailed questions and made a number of comments, which were responded to at the meeting, covering – preparations being made and timeline for the reinspection; resourcing to deliver the WSoA; impact of covid on staff capacity; engagement with families; links / relationship of SEND Strategy for 2023 onwards, to the developing Education Strategy; information sharing. Dr Hart said that by December 2022, he is confident will have delivered WSoA and embedded the improvement need to do.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Dr Hart for the detailed presentation and asked that the WSoA be brought back to a future meeting to provide information in more depth on the following – the items identified in 'red' on the progress overview (listening to CYP and their families; consistency of practice); clarity on resourcing point; data and digital inclusion; explanation / clarity on the relationship with the developing Education Strategy. The Chair and the Vice Chair will discuss with officers the best way forward for this.

6 **Development of an Education Strategy for Somerset** - Agenda Item 6

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director, Education, Partnership and Skills, Ms Amelia Walker, on the development of an Education Strategy for Somerset. This followed on from the presentation given at the October 2021 meeting on changes to the education governance arrangements in Somerset. The Cabinet member, Councillor Frances Nicholson introduced the item and said that the new Schools Forum

had held its first meeting recently and it felt positive and effective. The new Strategy Board will hold its first formal meeting shortly.

In the presentation, Ms Walker outlined the complex education landscape and the local authority role in education. In conclusion she explained that there are a number of areas under development which might feed into a new *system* Strategy, including: -

- the findings from Inclusion Inquiry;
- a new project working with LA Maintained schools (with option to extend to academies and trusts in future) looking at opportunities to get better value for money so we can invest;
- Oxford Brookes's project on Early Help;
- work underway to re-imagine how SEND services are delivered;
- expanding opportunities for cross-border working on curriculum and subjects, building on West Somerset Opportunity Area project.

These can be reported back to this Committee as they develop over the course of the coming year. It was noted that the findings from the Inclusion Inquiry is scheduled for a meeting of the Committee early next year.

The Committee asked detailed questions about the development of the Strategy and the partnership approach needed to take this forward. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Ms Walker for the detailed presentation, recognising that it is still early on in the process and the Strategy Board is yet to meet. The Committee would welcome feedback on the development of the Strategy and this will be added to the Committees' outcome tracker.

7 Evaluation of Somerset Family Safeguarding: Interim Report - Agenda Item 7

This item was DEFERRED to next meeting.

8 Supporting Eco-Friendly Schools - Agenda Item 9

The Committee considered a report and received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Head of Support Services for Education, Mr Ian Rowswell on work undertaken on supporting eco-friendly schools [Eco-Friendly Schools | Support Services for Education](#)

The SSE website was launched recently and provides useful information on how schools can undertake activities and link into the eco schools programme for example. Mr Rowswell provided some detail of support around school meal provision. He also outlined the next steps, as follows: –

- continue to promote the website and for further online events for schools;

- adding further information and links to new projects and resources that could support schools;
- work closely with the School Improvement Team to help evaluate resources and identify good curriculum links and resources;
- SCC successful bid to the Forestry Commission's Local Authorities Treescape Fund should result in planting 320 trees across Somerset;
- closer working with stakeholders and in particular with District Council colleagues; and
- consider how to address risks around capacity.

In response to comments made, Mr Rowswell said that the website will provide signposting to other funding opportunities and have focussed attention on additional support which schools can access. He also commented that are working closely with the Somerset Waste Partnership as well.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Mr Rowswell for the detailed presentation. It was agreed that an information sheet would be circulated to all members in due course.

9 **Items for information** - Agenda Item 10

The Committee noted the following information item had been circulated since the last meeting: -

- (a) CAMHS service delivery update – considered by the [Somerset Health & Wellbeing Board at the meeting on Monday 22 November 2021](#)

10 **Any other urgent items of business** - Agenda Item 11

There were no other items of business.

(The meeting ended at 4.23 pm)

CHAIR