

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE (VIRTUAL MEETINGS FROM MAY 2020 DUE TO CORONAVIRUS)

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee held as a Virtual Committee meeting on Thursday 9th July at 1.00pm

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr R Williams (Vice-Chair), Cllr M Dimery, Cllr J Lock, Cllr J Williams, Cllr W Wallace, Ruth Hobbs.

Other Members present: Cllr F Nicholson, Cllr F Purbrick, Cllr A Govier, Cllr T Munt, Cllr B Revans, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr C Lawrence, Cllr D Huxtable, Cllr C Paul, Cllr A Kendall, Cllr L Leyshon and Cllr M Lerry.

Apologies for absence: Cllr J Hunt and Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper.

1 Declarations of Interest – Agenda item 2

The Chair of the Committee invited those Members present to declare any interests not already registered as personal interests, such as being members of District, City, Town and Parish Councils and, available for inspection on the Council's website. There were no declarations made.

2 Minutes from the previous meeting - Agenda item 3

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2020 were an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3 Public Question Time - Agenda item 4

Ms Beverley Lister submitted her question to the Committee regarding the removal of the 49-page Unlawful document for Somerset's local offer as a member of the public. The Director of Children's Services, Julian Wooster, responded as appropriate.

Action: The Director of Children's Services to provide a written response to Ms Beverley Lister.

4 Scrutiny Work Programme – Agenda Item 5

Timetable to meet submission deadline for Written Statement of Actions (WSOA)

The following points were raised

- WSOA focussing on the 9 Areas to improve on.

- who will be on the improvement board and provision of a list of the Committee?
- no governance structure in terms of decision making, it will be accountable to its own organisations
- WSOA will be approved by all our own structures and agencies and submitted to OFSTED for final approval
- Upcoming meeting to discuss if we need more time to produce WSOA, the plan needs to be owned by all before submission, an extension may be required

The Director of Children's Services confirmed the list would be provided as soon as it is finalised. In addition, he advised that Senior Leaders to be involved and co-chaired by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Chief Executive, James Rimmer and Somerset County Council (SCC) Chief Executive, Patrick Flaherty. RSC will be on the Improvement Board as well as school representatives for particular sectors.

It was then asked, what happens if the WSOA is late and not good enough, will SCC Chief Executive and the CCG Chief Executive be responsible? The Director of Children's Services responded by stating that they are both committed to getting it delivered on time, however Covid19 has affected our ability to respond within the 70 day's timescale (mid-August) so now mid-September may be more realistic. He added, it's about getting it right.

A question was also asked, if the Improvement Plan and WSOA are one and the same document? (no answer recorded).

Work It was commented that the Inspectors are coming back in 18 months and underway since the inspection and can we improve our services within the given timescale?

The Director of Children's Services responded by saying that we need to have actions we can deliver at pace. The Big task is to focus on the areas we can make a significant difference, the 9 focus areas, the elements which are urgent, some are longer term and operating in a national context is important.

5 **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Area Inspection Update** – Agenda Item 6

The Chair of the Committee invited the Director of Children's Services to share the SEND Presentation with those attending the meeting and welcomed James Rimmer, Somerset CCG CEO and Becky Applewood, Somerset CCG.

The Committee considered the SEND report with various comments made on how the position was reached that resulted in the report, citing issues with a Blame culture being corrosive towards staff and that we now need to establish a more welcoming culture moving forward. It was noted that we are clearly not where we want to be, but we're in this together to improve things for young people and families. It's now about looking forward and Joint Working in Somerset, this needs building on as the commitment for a working partnership going forward is there. We now need to work together, building services that reflect the needs of those using them. It was also commented that change is a long process and that culture is not changed simply by saying it is, this takes longer. SEND is ever more complex and takes longer to deliver improvements, it takes time to establish the complex robust systems across agencies, the system is dependent on all working well together. It was also agreed that more investment needed to be made by the Council.

The presentation continued with partnership and joint commissioning and emphasized strong elements in services in Somerset, stating that there are good sets of arrangements beginning to benefit those using our services and their families. He also highlighted economic and geographic issues in terms of social mobility on certain areas in Somerset. A blame culture is leading to a feeling of mistrust. Leadership issue we need to get right, we haven't had the commitment in the past. The Director of Children's Services continued by commenting that it changed in the last year, progress made but a long way to go and more to do. Forty percent of our schools are academies, which we can't control, in terms of budget, we are spending significantly more to the impacts we need to improve the issues we are facing. School Governors need to be aware of the issues we are facing. Focus on diagnosis is a problem too at the moment, school staff need the right training and support.

It was noted that one of the 3 partners absent was the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). The question was asked, what is going to be done to get engagement?

In response the Director of Children's Services responded by stating that the challenge from OFSTED is not sufficiently owned by the NHS and Schools. WSOA needs their ownership and commitment to move forward by owning an element of the plan. He said that the RSC was committed to the WSOA.

Cllr Leigh Redman asked if we could make an action to seek reassurance on behalf of the committee her involvement is confirmed.

The Director of Children's Services then interjected and commented that it's started to change, see the report, CCG too late but we're starting to much closer. Joint Commissioning arrangements to be in place for the coming year, we've definitely moved forward. Clearly, we will need to work with Education,

and we will be looking to see what we can learn from others. We're now putting the accelerator down, strengthening our team and gaining momentum. It was also commented that regular meetings are happening to try to move things forward, schools are individual organisations, we would welcome the involvement of the Regional Schools Commissioner.

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

There were no other items of business

(The meeting ended at 15.56pm)

CHAIRMAN