

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee held in the Luttrell and Wyndham Rooms, County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY, on Wednesday 7 July 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr R Williams (Vice Chair), Cllr James Hunt, Cllr T Munt (substitute for Cllr M Dimery), Cllr B Revans and Cllr W Wallace
The Revd T Osmond – co-opted member

Other Members present: Cllr C Lawrence, Cllr C Paul, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr F Nicholson and Cllr P Clayton

Apologies for absence: Cllr M Dimery, Cllr L Vjeh and Cllr J Williams and R Hobbs and E Tipper – co-opted members

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

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

2 **Minutes from the meeting held on Wednesday 3 March 2021** - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 3 March 2021 were approved as a correct record.

3 **Minutes from the special meeting held on Tuesday 16 March 2021** - Agenda Item 4

The minutes of the special meeting held on Tuesday 16 March 2021 were approved as a correct record.

4 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 5

There were no questions submitted by members of the public.

5 **Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee Work Programme** - Agenda Item 6

The Committee considered and noted the Committee's current work programme and outcome tracker (which uses a traffic light system) and the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions in forthcoming months including Cabinet meetings up to 15 December 2021.

The following matters were raised by the Committee and also highlighted items for inclusion in the work programme-

- September meeting – include an update on the work of the current Task & Finish Group.
- Cllr Rod Williams and Cllr B Revans asked that consideration be given for a report included in work programme on the extent of the impact of Covid on children and young people’s education in Somerset.
- Cllr Munt – CAMHS service delivery update – this request will be considered as an item for information at the earliest opportunity (for possible feedback at another time).
- The Chair also referred to discussions at the Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee held earlier on 7 July and to discussions at that meeting regarding children’s oral health and the CAMHS service. He advised the Committee that he has also asked the Scrutiny Manager to clarify responsibilities between the Adults and Health Committee and the Children & Families Scrutiny Committee.
- The notes from the informal meeting of the Committee held on 9 June have been circulated to the Committee and the outcomes will be added to the outcome tracker.

The Chair also welcomed the Revd Tobie Osmond, co-opted member, to his first formal meeting of the Committee. There are currently 2 parent governor vacancies on the Committee and the Chair also made a call out for people to fill school governor vacancies more generally. The co-opted members are linked to education items and have voting rights on education matters and are able to fully participate in meetings.

6 **6 months on - learning from the voice of children & young people in the later stages of the pandemic** - Agenda Item 7

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council’s Participation & Partnership Manager, Fi Phur on learning from the voice of children and young people in the later stages of the pandemic and followed the presentation given at the meeting on 12 November 2020 on how the pandemic impacted on the delivery of the Children & Young People’s Plan (CYPP).

The purpose of the presentation at this meeting was to update on the development of the CYPP and to hear what young people have said directly about their experiences. Since the merger of the Childrens Trust and the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board to form the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) the 4 priorities of the CYPP have moved to be part of the 8 priorities of the SSCP and the CYPP is reported quarterly through their governance. It is also accountable to the Independent Scrutineer.

As an overview and background, Ms Phur advised that at the beginning of the of pandemic most young people were able to access engagement

opportunities digitally much more readily. Forums that met physically once a month all day needed to change to more manageable bite size engagement and the outcome of that was much more frequent engagement with young people. Now, young people are wanting a more blended approach (so face to face and Zoom). There is anxiety around 'capacity' as the young people at exam periods felt huge catch up pressure. Some with SEND and some children looked after did not welcome digital meetings as much as other forums due to anxiety and lack of social contact. She explained that there have been 4 forums running during the pandemic with an 'ad hoc' offer as well.

The 4 priorities of the CYPP are - supported families; healthy lives; great education; positive activities and Ms Phur detailed the key issues highlighted and outlined the involvement of young people: -

Supported families - some examples mentioned were - 'Mind of My Own' app which was re-licensed after consultation with young users and young non-users; young people have been involved in delivery of training to social work students at Yeovil College in half term.

Healthy lives – some examples mentioned were - training for all GPs and pharmacist in Somerset being rolled out; SEND young people annual health checks, co-design materials for GP's; Somerset Big Tent; recommissioning of Kooth (on-line counselling app).

Great education – some examples mentioned were – an intern had been employed working with 15 schools and toolkit being launched over the summer; Youth Forum meets termly and have written to education leaders for changes re environment and climate change.

Positive activities - some examples mentioned were – young people from SiCC, SLCC, Youth parliament and the Youth Forum worked with Children Commissioners on the holiday and food activities project.

In conclusion, Ms Phur highlighted the following next steps - will be promoting the results of 'Make Your Mark' survey (themes are – concern about exploitation, county lines, homelessness, domestic abuse), using them in the consultation for the next CYPP 2022 – 2025; the summer sessions of Youth Forum will be focussed on themes of transport and bullying; training - summer festival is being planned with partners and agencies on upskilling SEND young people on their ability to participate; Somerset Children and Young People Survey (SCYPS) by Public Health launch March–May 2021 – the evaluation and data will provide strong evidence to the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) and the new CYPP.

Following the presentation, the Committee watched a short film made by the Care Councils (Sicc and SLCC) - *children in care and care leavers asks of the council as corporate parents*.

The Committee members listened to the presentation and asked several detailed questions, which were responded to by Ms Phur and covered issues such as – how bring lessons learnt from current CYPP into new Plan and benchmarking; reassessing performance measures used – to outcome based accountability system / framework; Supported Families will come under Early Help / Early Intervention approach; young people raising issue of safe education, rather than generally education; safeguarding training and input into resources / support from young people; how best to promote volunteering (Spark) and see how best to reference in the CYPP.

The Chair thanked Fi Phur for the detailed presentation and thanked members for their comments and summed up the discussion as follows: –

- heard about the development of the next CYPP and how it is being shaped and ensure lessons learnt and that young people are instrumental in this.
- good to hear about the health and wellbeing intern and about the work they are doing and asked if they could come to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting to update members about this work.
- noted the safeguarding animation and training to help the LA Designated Officer (LADO) and GP's.
- asked for some case studies to be provided which could be shared widely (*you said, we did* etc.).
- asked that further information on the 'Big Tent' and *Kooth* be circulated to the Committee.
- asked that a briefing note about summer activities and eligibility, be circulated to all members.

AGREED that the presentation be welcomed and the information provided be noted.

7 **School Exclusions** - Agenda Item 8

The Committee considered a report and received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director, Inclusion, Dr Rob Hart who provided an update and progress on actions taken on the recommendations from the Committee's Task and Finish Group, next steps, and future priorities.

The presentation covered the following: –

- Somerset previously had historic high rates of exclusion from schools
- the Task and Finish Group reported in May 2020 with 10 recommendations which were endorsed by Cabinet in September 2020

- position over last year with fixed period exclusions (varied) and permanent exclusions and the impact of the pandemic – with changes in practice in schools, increase in elective home education at start of school year and also disruption to education and attendance
- the way forward – WSoA – there has been improved performance re completing EHC needs assessments; and referenced the inclusive schools strands, including - the school-led inclusion enquiry; area-based partnership working; strengthening SEND in schools; focused review of Early Help offer
- the way forward – will be a focus on - ‘engagement’ rather than ‘exclusion’; vulnerable learners – extending the role of virtual school; locality inclusion partnerships, with joined up approach to identifying and supporting vulnerable learners; accountability for funding & graduated response; working together creatively to find better solutions.

The Committee members listened to the presentation and asked several detailed questions, which were responded to by Dr Hart as follows: -

- The teams around school test and learn pilots, in Taunton and Cheddar – these will begin in September and will be reviewed with view to being rolled out further
- SEND networks, led by Special Schools and locality-based networks – try to align them.
- The focus on working together creatively to find better solutions – look at virtual school model and extend model to other children & local first panel model.
- Questions on timeliness and also quality of EHCPs, noting that this is an item on the agenda for the October meeting of the Committee.
- Questions about ‘off rolling’ and reference to the [Timpson Review of School Exclusion](#) (not yet implemented) and also training for teachers on dealing with challenging behaviour – mention also made of trauma informed practice.
- The pandemic has had a significant impact and there are a number of young people in need of support - how will the work detailed in the presentation be coordinated and would like more information about the ‘local first panel’.
- Requested that Dr Hart provide an update in 6 months-time on progress on actions taken on the recommendations from the Committee’s Task and Finish Group and the future work outlined in the presentation.

The Chair thanked Dr Hart for the detailed presentation and thanked members for their comments.

8 **Somerset County Council Business Plan - 2021-2023** - Agenda Item 9

The Committee considered a report and received a presentation from the Council's Corporate Affairs Director, Simon Clifford and from the Council's Corporate Planning and Performance Manager, James Hadley. The County Council Business Plan 2021 – 2023 details the strategic ambitions of the authority for the next 2 years.

During the debate, the Committee focussed on the ambitions of the draft Business Plan, set out in Appendix A and the sections which were most relevant to the Scrutiny Committee. The Committee also thanked officers for the time spent briefing Councillors on the Business Plan.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the 2021-23 Draft Business Plan, set out in Appendix A to the submitted report.

9 **Task and Finish Group - update** - Agenda Item 10

The Committee received and noted the update report on the work of the Task and Finish Group on the 'Continuity of Children's Services through Local Government Reorganisation'.

10 **Information Items circulated to the Scrutiny Committee since the last meeting** - Agenda Item 11

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

- (a) Children's oral health – briefing paper from the Council's Health Promotion Manager, E Hutt. This outlined how SCC are meeting their statutory responsibilities around oral health including the oral health improvement service, commissioned by SCC Public Health.

The Chair asked that any questions or comments on the paper should be raised with the report author.

11 **Any other urgent items of business** - Agenda Item 12

There were no other items of business.

(The meeting ended at 4.17 pm)
CHAIR