
SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

3 October 2022

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Declarations of Interest - Agenda item 2

The following declaration of interest was made at the meeting; -

- (a) Ruth Hobbs – co-opted member – CEO Somerset Parent Carer Forum CIC (agenda item 9 refers)

Minutes from the previous meeting held on 5 September 2022 - Agenda item 3

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 5 September 2022 were approved and signed as a correct record.

Public Question Time - Agenda item 4

There were no questions asked, statements made or petitions presented.

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

The Committee considered and noted the Committee's current work programme and outcome tracker and the Executive's Forward Plan of planned key decisions in coming months.

It was agreed that: -

- The progress on Ofsted inspection action plan – would be detailed report and debate at the November meeting
- The detailed 2022 Key Stage assessment results for Somerset – add to January 2023 meeting
- The work plan and outcome tracker be updated.

In response to a query from Cllr Hunt about support for Ukrainian families and signposting, members were advised to contact B Strange, in the Public Health Team.

Ofsted Inspection Result - Children's Social Care Services - update - Agenda item 6

The Committee received a verbal update from the Council's Deputy Director Children's Services, Claire Winter on the Inspection of Somerset local authority children's services. The

Inspection of the Council's Children's Social Care services in July rated the services Good across the board and the inspection report was published on 21 September 2022. The report can be found on the following link – [Inspection of Somerset local authority children's services](#)

Members of the Committee congratulated the team and all those involved on this achievement.

Ms Winter highlighted the 2 recommendations in the report – namely placement sufficiency (which is also a national issue) and the take-up of return to home interviews and that this will be the main areas of focus in the action plan work.

The Committee will have the opportunity to have a more detailed discussion at its next meeting.

Children's Services Budget Monitoring Report - Agenda item 8

This item was introduced by the Council's Assistant Director Inclusion, Dr Rob Hart who referred to the most recent budget monitoring report ([2022/23 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – Month 4 – end July 2022](#)) and focussing on the current projected adverse variance and the major cost pressures across Home to School and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) transport.

The Committee: -

- (a) Noted the proposed actions to address the budget trajectory, including the Children's Transformation Programme, which focuses effort on key areas of demand / pressures
- (b) Noted that the Executive has asked the Committee to review the 2022/23 budget monitoring position for its services and agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair will discuss further establishing a Task & Finish Group to look at the 'top spends', transport and external placements.

Home to School Transport - Agenda item 7

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Strategic Manager, Access & Additional Learning Needs Phil Curd and Service Manager Transporting Somerset John Perrett, who provided an overview of the Council's school transport duties, demand, growth of specialist places, transport organisation, costs, the significant challenges in the provision of home to school transport across Somerset and the development of a new School Travel Cost Management Strategy.

It was noted that a presentation had also been given at the Place Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 6 September 2022.

It was agreed: -

- (a) to note the update and current position and proposed next steps and development
- (b) to add school transport to the Committee's work plan for refreshed Council policy (to reflect statutory guidance and possible discretionary changes)
- (c) the Chair and Vice Chair to discuss further a possible Task and Finish Group for SEND transport, to include provision for pre and post school club attendance, for example.

SEND Draft Strategy and Development - Agenda item 9

This item was introduced by the Council's Assistant Director Inclusion Dr Rob Hart, and Strategic Manager, Commissioning, Vikki Hearn who outlined the on-going work in developing the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2023-26.

The strategy will set the priorities for SEND improvement following on from the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) period, due to be completed by the end of December 2022. The priorities are evidence based and have been developed through extensive engagement, from the findings of the SEND JSNA, and taking into consideration the vast amount of research commissioned to better understand the needs of the SEND system.

The Committee then received a PowerPoint presentation from Ruth Hobbs, highlighting the key messages from the recent Somerset's SEND Annual Survey.

The Committee: -

- (a) Noted the following emerging SEND Strategy Themes which will be underpinned by a number of mission statements, outlining how these will be delivered, for consultation.
 1. Listen, Hear and Respond - Children and young people with SEND and their families will be heard and feel they have choice and control about their lives. Not for me, with me.
 2. Working Together and Coordinated - We are working together as a co-ordinated system and at the case level, around the family.
 3. Getting Help as Early as Possible - Children, young people and their families are able to access the right support at the right time.
 4. Access to the right information, support and provision - Children, young people and their families telling us: "I understand the support and provision that is available to me, and I can access it, if I need it."
 5. Preparing for the future - Children and young people have the right skills and options, according to their individual needs, to take control of their future and achieve the ambitions important to them.
- (b) Asked to see the final report from the Annual Survey when it is available.
- (c) Asked that the consultation draft of the SEND Strategy be shared with the Committee
- (d) That the SEND Strategy be brought back to the Committee after the consultation and engagement has concluded.

Items for Information - Standing Item - Agenda item 10

The Vice Chair advised that at the last meeting he had requested some information about what is in place to address the impact of COVID on pupil / staff absences and school closures – the Committee noted that the detailed response provided had been shared with all members of the Committee.

Any other urgent items of business - Agenda item 11

There were no other items of business.