

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 Monday 12 December 2022 at 1.00 pm

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr O Patrick (Vice-Chair), Cllr J Baker, Cllr S Carswell, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr S Hart, Cllr A Hendry (substitute for Cllr S Aujla), Cllr J Hunt (attended virtually), Cllr J Kenton, Cllr E Potts-Jones (attended virtually) and Cllr M Lovell
The Revd T Osmond – co-opted member

Other Members present: Cllr T Munt, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr Cllr A Dance, Cllr F Nicholson, Cllr S Osborne and Cllr L Trimnell

Other Members present virtually: Cllr C Ellis, Cllr A Bradford, Cllr H Shearer, Cllr M Stanton and Cllr R Woods

Apologies for absence: Cllr S Aujla (substituted by Cllr A Hendry), Cllr J Snell, R Hobbs (co-opted member) and E Tipper (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 7 November 2022 - Agenda Item 3

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 7 November 2022 were approved and signed as a correct record.

3 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

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

At the last meeting, Mr Whittaker had asked a number of questions relating to the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services and to policies and procedures in Somerset in particular relating to Special Guardians. The Executive lead member, Cllr Tessa Munt advised the Committee that she had met with Mr Whittaker and that this conversation is ongoing. The written response / outcomes will be shared with the Committee.

4 **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 the coming months.

The Vice Chair queried whether the Education White Paper item still needed to be listed as a future agenda item in the outcome tracker – the Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills said that the item should remain on the programme until the position is clearer.

The work plan and outcome tracker were NOTED.

5 **Education Strategy for Somerset - progress update** - Agenda Item 6

The Council's Assistant Director Education and Partnerships and Skills, Ms Walker advised that the Strategy is still being discussed (with SLT, Executive and Department for Education) and will bring back to Scrutiny / engage with Scrutiny as part of any consultation.

Item DEFERRED.

6 **LA Maintained Schools - Core Offer - Business Case** - Agenda Item 7

Pre Executive item

The Committee considered a report and received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director Education and Partnerships and Skills, Ms Walker regarding the proposals for changing the current support offer for Local Authority Maintained Schools.

The Committee held a thorough discussion of the options after hearing from the Executive Member and receiving a presentation to further explain the background for the proposals, noting there had been a yearlong conversation held with Somerset schools.

During the discussion the following topics were mentioned and answered and further details were provided regarding:

- Changing the financial arrangement between the LA and schools;
- Giving choice to schools, the base offer and bespoke offer
- The proposals would not affect pupil premium
- Limiting the net increase, in cost, to schools to 60%
- Maintaining capacity for schools
- Changes to grant funding

The Committee welcomed the presentation and were generally supportive of the proposed direction of travel and proposals for enhancing the Councils relationship with Somerset Schools. It was noted that all Schools would be able to utilise the admissions service and that a previous underfunding of the school appeals service had been addressed.

The Committee accepted the proposals and endorsed their presentation to the Executive at its meeting on 14 December 2022 by the Lead Member noting the contingency fund for schools is increased from £7k to £17.5k and requested:

- The committee were generally supportive of the adoption of option 3; and
- That the proposals be monitored with regular reports to ensure mitigation where necessary and to limit any negative, detrimental impact to Children, Schools and Schools Staff and that an update report be provided 6 months after implementation (October 2023).

7 **Somerset Connect and links to the Frome LCN development** - Agenda Item 8

The Committee considered a report and received a presentation from the Council's Assistant Director Commissioning, R Selwyn and Strategic Manager Public Health, P Temple, who provided details of the Somerset Connect pilot, (a community-based model) and links to the Frome LCN development. M Wide Deputy Leader Frome Town Council and Chair of Frome Area LCN also joined meeting.

Somerset Connect is an emerging jointly-commissioned (children, adults, and health) community-based model which seeks to better connect, and add value to the work already taking place in communities across the County. The model focuses on three key areas of improvement:

- Access – ensuring families and people in need can easily access the information, guidance and support they need. Removing any existing barriers caused by siloed working.
- Connections – ensuring those services working in communities (health, social care, schools and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sectors (VCFSE)) can easily connect to ensure the right support, in the right place, at the right time is available.
- Relationships – ensuring that through every contact families and people in need are being empowered to be resilient, building their own community and networks of support.

The Committee made a number of comments, which were responded to at the meeting: -supportive of work, but don't reinvent wheel and learn from other areas; reconsider re consider what called, as 'Somerset Connect' sounds similar to 'Somerset Direct'; connections between people are important; need to include local members (good resource); careful that don't end up with a digital

by default offer; how will hubs be staffed; how ensure appropriate signposting happens; learn from the warm-hubs and full county wide roll out.

In response to the points made, Mr Selwyn confirmed there will be an evaluation of the pilot in the new year (tender); with regard to staffing of the hubs, will provide some support in terms of capacity in each of the primary care network areas; the point made about signposting is a good one; will be clear that its an offer of help available to all families.

On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked Mr Selwyn, Ms Temple for the report and presentation and Mr Wide for attending.

8 **Verbal Update on Task and Finish Groups** - Agenda Item 9

The Chair provided a verbal update on the Committee's Task and Finish Groups and also advised that the original timeline has been amended due to the SEND Inspection: -

Sufficiency of External Placements

- Membership of the Task and Finish Group - Cllr Leigh Redman (Chair), Cllr Simon Carswell, Cllr Susannah Hart, Cllr Martin Lovell and Ruth Hobbs
- The Group held an initial meeting on 6 December 2022 to discuss numbers of external placements / data. Will meet again on 20 December and then 18 January 2023.
- Will provide further report to next meeting (January 2023)

Home to School Transport

- Membership of the Task and Finish Group – Cllr John Hunt, Cllr Evie Potts-Jones, Cllr A Hadley and Rev'd Tobie Osmond
- Will provide further details to next meeting (January 2023)

The Chair also advised that the Scrutiny at Somerset Council Task and Finish Group is due to hold its first meeting on 14 December 2022. The purpose of the Task and Finish Group is to review the current approach, structure and resource of scrutiny at Somerset County Council and Somerset District Councils and agree an approach to the structure and approach to scrutiny at Somerset Council from 1st April 2023.

The Committee NOTED the updates.

9 **Items for Information - Standing Item** - Agenda Item 10

The Committee noted the following items for information: -

- (a) 2022 Key Stage assessment results – correspondence sent to the Leader Somerset County Council on 14 November and Response received on 15 November 2022
- (b) Somerset [Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2021 – 22](#) - circulated on 15 November 2022
- (c) [Peninsula Fostering Framework Agreement](#) - Decision taken on 16 November 2022 – circulated on 21 November 2022

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

There were no other items of business.

(The meeting ended at 3.30 pm)

CHAIR