
SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

Held - 6 March 2023

(Published on 09 March 2023)

Minutes from the previous meeting held on 16 January 2023 - Agenda item 3
--

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 16 January 2023 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 the coming months.

Joint Local Area SEND Inspection Outcomes and update on SEND Green Paper - Agenda item 6

<p>The Committee received a report and PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Head of SEND, Claire Merchant-Jones on the recent Joint Local Area SEND Inspection outcomes. The revisit inspection took place between 28 November and 1 December 2022 and the Committee received a copy of the revisit inspection report.</p>
--

<p>As a result of the re-inspection, Ofsted and CQC judged that the area had made sufficient progress in addressing seven of the significant weaknesses identified during the 2020 inspection. Examples of improvements reported:</p>

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A strong commitment to working together with partners including families to improve area services.• Sustained improvements to the timeliness and quality of education, health, and care plans.• An improved autism pathway including a pre-assessment pathway that schools can refer into.• Improvements in early years SEND services that have helped to improve parental confidence in their children's readiness for nursery and school.• Development of new enhanced SEND provision within some mainstream schools. |
|---|

<p>Ofsted and CQC judged that the area had not made sufficient progress in addressing two of the significant weaknesses identified during the 2020 inspection. Examples of further</p>
--

improvement needed:

- Too many children and young people requiring SEND support have a poor experience.
- For those children with an EHC plan, too often they do not receive the provision that is set out in their plan.
- The rate of exclusion from schools in Somerset for children and young people with SEND continues to be too high.
- High rates of repeat suspensions and imposition of long-term part-time timetables was reported.

Ms Merchant-Jones outlined the next steps, which are: -

- the area is required to develop and implement an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) to address the remaining two areas of weakness by Tuesday 21st March 2023. Work on this will be 'at pace.'
- The two-year programme of activity within the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) will end.
- activities that remain outstanding and a priority will form part of the plan for delivery of the new SEND Strategy that will be published in Spring 2023.
- Governance arrangements to change to reflect closure of WSoA and development of new Children and Families Board.

Ms Merchant-Jones also provided a brief update in the response to the [SEND Green Paper, published on 2 March 2023](#). This sets out plans to change the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision system in England.

It was AGREED that the Committee receive an update on the new Inspection Framework and the APP in 4 months. The Committee has previously agreed that the SEND Strategy will be come to Scrutiny.

The Committee additionally commented that a flow chart would be helpful, showing the reporting mechanism for the Children & Families Board, its terms of reference and membership and how the views of children and young people are represented on the Integrated Care Board.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Ms Merchant-Jones for the update and presentation.

'Education for Life' Strategy - Agenda item 7

The Committee received a presentation from the Council's Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker on an Education for Life Strategy for Somerset 2023 – 2028.

Ms Walker provided the background context to the development of the Strategy, what steps need to be taken, the implementation plan and outlined the 5-year goals, which are:

- Goal 1 – Improved access to support in the early years of life so that every child is ready to start school confidently.
- Goal 2 - Increased inclusion in all schools and in our communities so every child is included in their school 100% of the time.
- Goal 3 - Strong and supportive leadership capacity within and between Somerset schools so that improvement is sustainable, and educational outcomes are improved in every key phase.
- Goal 4 - Young people have access to further and higher education in the county where they can develop adaptable skills so they can join and progress in the workforce in Somerset.

Ms Walker outlined the year one proposed priorities which are – the best start in life; thriving schools; great futures and how the work will be driven, evaluated, and explained the new governance groups – Education System Leadership Group and Education for Life Board. It was proposed that there be a strong link between scrutiny and the Education for Life Board and that the Committee consider having a Task Group on education standards. The Committee asked to see the proposed terms of reference at the next meeting and will then consider how best to link into this work.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Ms Walker for the presentation and asked that details about the launch event on 21 March be circulated.

LA Maintained Schools - Core Offer - update - Agenda item 8

The Committee received an update from the Council's Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker on the LA Maintained School, Core Offer.

This outlined the background to the proposals and changes made following extensive reflection and feedback. In terms of next steps, officers have: -

- Met with phase leaders (Wed 1 March)
- Briefings for heads and governors (2/3 March)
- Issuing to individual schools (6 March) - Decision survey; New high-level statements; New 'ready-reckoner'
- Uploading bespoke packages (ongoing from 5 March)
- Deadline for response is Friday 10 March
- Once have responses, will review - seeking 100% sign up following positive responses from school leaders in the previous week. There are some possible mitigations if this is not achieved but remain hopeful can achieve a collaborative consensus.

The Committee requested that this revised offer goes back to the Executive at the first opportunity to allow them to review the changes.

The Committee further recognises the value of the Core Offer for schools and endorses the goals and intended outcomes of implementing the Core Offer whilst recognising the

dilemma that has been caused by funding reductions to local authority budgets and inflationary pressures. The Committee highlights its ongoing concerns about how the transition will be funded, for both sides, and the potential funding gap.

The Committee requested that a response comes back to the next meeting in May 2023.

Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Groups - update - Agenda item 9

The Committee received an update on the Task and Finish Groups: -

Sufficiency of external placements

The Committee considered the report which outlined the findings of the Task and Finish Group and supported the recommendations to the Executive member for Children and Families.

Home to School Transport

The Transport Review (Home to School & SEND) will be complete by April and include the Task and Finish Group in deliberations. Richard Hall, who is undertaking the transport review will meet the Task and Finish group to discuss this and a meeting is being organised.

Items for Information - Standing Item - Agenda item 10

The Committee noted the following items for information: -

(a) Email sent regarding '[Government unveils reforms in children's social care](#)' – on 3 February 2023

the deadline to respond is 4 May 2023 and have added the proposed consultation response to the forward work plan of the committee)

(b) Overview of Ofsted annual conversation - slides circulated on 9 February 2023

(c) Academisation – update - information circulated on 3 March 2023.