

**Minutes of a meeting of the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny  
Committee held at the Bourges/Viersen Room - Town Hall  
on 14 November 2011**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Councillors S Day (Chair), C Harper (Vice Chairman), F Benton, G Elsey, M Nadeem,  
B Saltmarsh and J Shearman  
Parish Councillors

**OFFICERS PRESENT:**

**1. Apologies for absence**

No apologies were received.

**2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations**

**Agenda item 7: Academies**

Councillor Saltmarsh declared a personal interest in that her husband was a Director at the Thomas Deacon Academy.

**3. Minutes of Meeting Held on 12 September 2011**

The minutes of the meetings held on 12 September 2011 were approved as an accurate record.

**4. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions**

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

**5. Portfolio Progress Report**

The report informed the Committee on the progress that had been made on the Cabinet Member for Children's Services portfolio. Key areas highlighted in the report were:

- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Social Care Activity
- Adoption
- Transition
- Multi Systemic Therapy

- The 8 – 19 Service
- Youth Offending Service

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services was in attendance to take questions.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- With reference to the 8 – 19 Service. There is mention in the report of a Friday Night Football programme which has been developed to engage young people and men up to the age of 19. Can you advise what activities are being provided for girls and young women? The Cabinet Member for Children's Services advised that the provision for girls and young women would be looked into and that an updated would be included in the next progress report to the Committee.
- Members commented that the report had not given enough detail on all the activities that were being provided across the City for young people and that future reports should provide a more detailed breakdown. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services noted the comment and advised that more detail would be provided in the next report regarding city wide activities with particular reference being made to the outreach bus.
- Members requested further detail on the Early Intervention and Prevention work and in particular work being undertaken to ensure the coherence of the services to families and partner agencies. Members were informed that Janet Dullaghan, Assistant Director had been assigned a piece of work to bring together all the services that were focused around early intervention and prevention and then to look at how the services related to each other and the needs of the community. The piece of work would ensure that there were clear pathways for families to access the right services as quickly as possible to meet their needs.
- Was there a defined timeline for this piece of work? Members were advised that developed proposals would be published in early January 2012.
- Members noted the excellent performance of the adoption service but wanted to know if any progress had been made concerning the issue of foster parents wanting to adopt their foster children but not being able to due to financial disadvantages. Councillor Scott advised that this issue might have been overlooked due to the recent events of the Ofsted visit but would ensure that this would be looked into and would report back to the Committee as part of the next progress report. The Assistant Director Safeguarding, Families and Communities advised that adoption allowances were paid but tended to focus on children with special needs.
- The report stated that due to external and internal policy and practice changes the numbers of young people coming into the justice system had fallen for the first time. Could you explain what the policy changes were and how this has had a positive impact? Members were advised that the Police had changed the way they dealt with first time offenders. The previous approach taken for first time offenders who had been caught for a minor offence e.g. taking a small item in a shop was that they had been issued with a caution or charged which therefore resulted in a criminal record. The police were now taking a different approach called Restorative Justice which involved the young person who had committed the offence meeting with the person they had offended against rather than charging them. This had therefore reduced the number of first time entrants into the youth justice system.
- Members wanted to know if officers were aware of the various minority ethnic groups like the Latvian Community Association, Polish Community Organisation, Czech and Slovak Community Organisations, Lithuanian Saturday School and had they made contact with them to inform them of the services being offered. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services informed Members that it was important to ensure that services were available to all communities in Peterborough and that she was conscious that officers needed to make contact with all the communities in the City and ensure they understood all the services that were available to them. The Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Families and Communities informed Members of a recent initiative around adoption and fostering. There had been a number of children who had entered the system from Eastern

European National Communities and this had posed a challenge in trying to match them in terms of foster care and adoption. Work was being undertaken with a range of communities to help them to understand that adoption and fostering was available to them and that support and help was available to assist them to foster or adopt.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Children's Services for her progress report.

### **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee requested that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services report back to the Committee in six months on the progress made on her portfolio and to include:

1. Early Intervention and Prevention. A detailed report on the work being completed by Janet Dullaghan regarding coherence of services to families.
2. The 8 – 19 Service. A detailed list of activities provided to young people across the city including specific activities for girls and young woman and further information on the outreach bus.
3. Fostering to adoption. Feedback on the issue of foster carers who wished to adopt but had not been able to due to financial disadvantages.

## **6. Ofsted Improvement Plan**

The report informed the Committee about an Improvement Plan that had been developed in response to the findings and recommendations of the Ofsted safeguarding inspection carried out in August 2011 and the subsequent diagnostic work undertaken. The Executive Director of Children's Services presented the report and informed the Committee that support had been brought in from other local authorities and sector led specialists to undertake the diagnostic work which had been an in depth piece of work. The improvement plan presented would be reworked on a thematic basis but the basis of the improvement plan was the need to ensure that social work practice was consistent and effective. The general approach to improvement being adopted was to take good practice strategies, policies and material from other local authorities and implement them locally rather than designing new arrangements for Peterborough. The current social care information system, RAISE had not been fit for purpose and as a consequence case recording had been far too variable. The system would therefore be replaced with a product called LiquidLogic in April 2012. An external Improvement Board had been set up that would be independently chaired and would meet monthly to monitor the progress of the Improvement Plan. There would be some performance indicators to measure performance of the Improvement Plan but there was also a need for a better and more qualitative based approach to monitoring performance. An example of this would be to increase capacity to audit individual case files.

The Executive Director of Children's Services proposed that the Committee form a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group to monitor the Improvement Plan. Proposed terms of reference and objectives of the Task and Finish Group were included in the report.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- How much of a risk assessment has been conducted to evaluate the impact of the extent of change that was going to happen in the short term through the actions from the development plan. Members were informed that there was a high level of awareness that the service was currently in a period of high risk due to the changes taking place. Progress and capacity was constantly being monitored at weekly meetings. Measures were being taken to address this; one example of this was that all partner agencies had been written to reminding them of the escalation process should they have concerns about individual cases. Quality assurance of cases had also been a key focus. Project management methodology was being used to manage some parts of the development

plan an example of this was putting new technology in place. The development plan covered a period of eighteen months and there would be times when the timeline would be challenging and would need to be reevaluated.

- Members sought assurance that the day to day running of the service would continue while the changes were being made. Members were informed that the biggest area of concern had been the volume of work that had been coming into the contact, referral and assessment function. Discussions had taken place to decide how to deal with the high level of case loads that were in that team and the main focus had been on quality, detail and ensuring that there was enough capacity to deal with demand.
- What progress had been made with employing more social workers? Members were advised that there were vacancies in the reception and assessment team and only three vacancies outside of that team. Attendance at a recent career fair had attracted 120 enquiries. A large number of agency staff had been brought in to cope with demand while an assessment had been done to establish how many social workers would be required. There was an ongoing recruitment campaign for social workers in the reception and assessment team and for team managers in other areas.
- Were all social workers following the same set of procedures now? Members were informed that this had not been happening and this was currently one of the areas being looked at. Whilst new processes, practices and systems were being developed areas such as effective supervision was being focused on as a performance indicator.
- Were other authorities being looked at for examples of good practice? Members were informed that support had been drawn upon from other authorities such as Hertfordshire, Tower Hamlets and Southend.
- Could you provide further detail of the outcomes from the audit of 190 case files? The Director of Children's Services advised that a summary of the key findings would be provided.
- Have the temporary staff alleviated the capacity issues. Members were advised that filling the establishment had been relatively successful but there were still some concerns around some key teams and this was being monitored on a daily basis. A piece of work was being done to look at what the establishment should be in the longer term, this would cover all teams across the establishment.
- The report stated that the current social care information system RAISE was not fit for purpose and would be replaced by April 2012. What is being done in the mean time to alleviate the problems with case recording? Various solutions had been looked at to reduce the time social workers had to spend logging cases. Extra business support had been brought in to help with this. Social workers had the option to dictate the information for business support officers to put the information onto the system.
- Can the social workers and legal team ensure they are prepared when they have to go to court? How many adjournments have there been recently. The Assistant Director was unaware of any recent adjournments. A lot of issues around delayed court proceedings were not necessarily due to social workers. Issues in the past had been about the quality of work and timeliness but this had been addressed. Regular meetings were held with the legal team, Solicitor to the Council and Clerk for the Courts to ensure issues were resolved before going to court.
- Is the remuneration package offered when recruiting new staff causing a problem in obtaining the right calibre staff? Members were informed that this was not an issue and that the Council paid relatively well compared to neighbouring authorities. The package being offered was competitive.

The Committee agreed to set up a Task and Finish group to oversee the implementation of the Improvement Plan for Children's Services. The Terms of Reference were agreed by the Committee.

The Senior Governance Officer took note of those committee members who wished to be nominated for the Task and Finish group and advised the Committee that a letter would be sent to the Group Secretaries asking for further nominations to the task and finish group. Nominations were received from the following Members of the Committee:

Councillors S Day, Elsey, Benton, Harper, Saltmarsh

Parent Governor Representative Alistair Kingsley also wished to be nominated.

The Chair thanked the Executive Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services for the work completed so far on the Improvement Plan and wished it noted that the Committee were fully supportive of the actions being taken. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services thanked the Committee for their support.

### **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Executive Director of Children's Services to provide a summary of the key findings from the audit of 190 case files.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Committee recommend that a task and finish group be formed to oversee the implementation of the Improvement Plan for Children's Services.
2. The Committee agreed the following terms of reference for the task and finish group:

Purpose

The Task and Finish Group will oversee the implementation of the Improvement Plan for Children's Services.

This will be achieved through the following activities:

- Attending facilitated meetings with social care teams
- Observation through office visits and panel activities
- Presentation of anonymised recent case examples by social workers
- Direct contact with Foster Carer Support Groups
- Assessing and validating relevant performance data
- Participation in Children's Social Care training courses
- Gaining an overview of Children's Social Care Quality Assurance work

The Task and Finish Group members to be given training opportunities on the Council's arrangements for Children's Social Care in relation to its services and structures, the statutory framework for services and the member's role and;

Advice on whistle blowing and also potential conflict of interests to be provided

### **Reporting**

- A standard format will be adopted for recording member visits to teams (suggested format attached)
- Reports of Task and Finish Group to accompany progress reports to the Committee on the Improvement Plan at each meeting of the parent Scrutiny Committee.
- A final report will be presented to the parent Scrutiny Committee with recommendations.

The Task and Finish Group to be in existence for a period of 18 months until the completion of the implementation of the improvement plan.

## 7. Academies

The report had been written in response to a request from the Committee for a briefing on academies to raise their awareness of how they operated and what were the key differences from maintained schools. Key points highlighted were:

What was an academy?

- An academy was an independent school.
- An academy received funding directly from the Secretary of State.
- As part of the funding arrangements, it cannot charge fees.

Areas of freedom that an academy had were:

- Staff pay and conditions: Academies were not required to follow national Teachers' Pay and Conditions.
- The Curriculum: Must be broad and balanced, include English, maths and science, and the National Curriculum assessment arrangements.
- School Organisation: Academies can change the length of terms and school days.
- Financial and accounting arrangements: Academies do not have to comply with local authority finance arrangements but follow company accounts.

The contract for an academy was a legally binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the academy. The termination would require a seven year notice period.

There were seven academies in Peterborough with another one due to convert in April 2012.

There were three types of academies.

Phase 1 Academies were Academies formed from a school or a cluster of schools achieving less than 25% A-C GCSE grades over three consecutive years or significant re-organisation. These academies were established from sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups in collaboration with partners from the local community. Thomas Deacon Academy had been sponsored by Perkins Engines.

Phase 2 - Sponsored Academies where existing schools had been identified as underachieving and a strong sponsor agreed to run / operate the school. Sponsors come from a wide range of backgrounds including education trusts, charities, and commerce but typically were successful schools elsewhere.

Phase 3 – Converter Academies. In 2010, schools rated 'outstanding' or 'good with outstanding features' by OfSTED could apply for academy status. Other schools could apply as part of a partnership with a 'outstanding or good school' or existing academy trust with a proven track record of school improvement. 'Outstanding' special schools could apply from January 2011.

Academies received the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school plus additions to cover the LA services that are no longer provided for them.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- With a number of schools moving to the academy format and choosing potentially to provide their own administrative services how will this impact on the Local Authority Services for the remaining schools who do not move to academy status. The priority for the Council was still very much about improving educational outcomes. The LA would

continue to support schools in the way they had done in the past and the services provided would be refined and tailored to the needs of the schools.

- How will academies impact on the admissions criteria? The LA would still be responsible for co-ordinated admissions arrangements and supply of school places. The change of schools to academy status had not impacted on admissions.
- The Thomas Deacon Academy (TDA) admission criteria had caused problems with admissions across the city. The admissions arrangement had been forced upon them by the previous Government. Was there anything that could be done to change this? The admissions criteria for TDA was out of kilter with the rest of the city and had been continually challenged with the DfE. The new school opening up on the former Hereward site would take some of the catchment from the TDA and would therefore provide an opportunity to write to the DfE again with a co-ordinated response from the Council and schools across the city to try and get it changed.

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Committee noted the report.

## **8. Educational Attainment of Minority Groups and New Arrivals**

The purpose of the report was to inform the Committee of the demographic situation in relation to minority groups and new arrivals, their historical and current educational attainment and the strategies employed in schools to support those groups of learners. The Assistant Director of Education and Resources presented the report which included statistical data provided from two measures that the DfE used to capture information on diverse populations. The first was English as an additional language (EAL), which referred to pupils who were being taught in English to who English was an additional language i.e. not their language of first use. The second being the recording of ethnic minority which was a compulsory requirement of all pupils aged 5 and over. There had been a rapid increase in both these measures over the last five years. Peterborough had been the second largest growing cohort of EAL in the country. There had been a wide gap in the levels of attainment between EAL and non EAL pupils and this was being dealt with as a key priority for schools. Minority Ethnic New Arrivals (MENA) which were children who had been in the country less than two years accounted for 6.3% of the population in the schools. Peterborough had a wide range of cultural diversity across the city and within the schools which had brought a number of positive aspects and richness to the city.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- How long does a family have to be in the country before their offspring cease to be classed as an EAL? Members were informed that it was up to the parents to record whether their children were EAL or not when they entered a school. This was a difficult measure to manage and advice and guidance had been given to schools to assist parents.
- Members commented that there was a myth that non English speaking children in the class room had an effect on the attainment of the English speaking children. The report however indicated that there had been a year on year improvement in attainment at key stage 2 for non EAL pupils therefore dispelling that myth.
- Councillor Shearman commented that he was aware that the Polish and Lithuanian communities ran Saturday schools for their children where English was taught. Had formal contact been made with those groups and were other community groups being encouraged to follow their example. This was encouraged and all the schools that had significant co-horts of community groups had close links with those groups.
- The report states that if further funding were available, one of the areas considered to have the most impact upon outcomes for minority groups would be "Being able to employ extra teachers rather than teaching assistants to run directed specific intervention

programmes to support EAL learners”. Why has this statement been made and what was the evidence that teachers were better at supporting EAL learners than well trained teaching assistants. Members were informed that the statement had come directly from schools and was part of their own intervention strategies. Teaching assistants who have the bilingual skills and an understanding of curriculum delivery in primary schools was a good model. In secondary schools there was a need to work in smaller groups and for more specialist provision. This methodology had proved to provide better outcomes in secondary schools.

- Members commented that it was important to keep a focus on educational attainment of children across the city and requested that an action plan was produced showing all the initiatives and strategies for raising attainment across the city. This could then be monitored by the Committee. The Assistant Director for Education and Resources advised that there were many areas being looked at and educational outcomes remained critical. An action plan could be produced.
- Members noted that there had been no mention of school attendance within the report. Was there a strategy in place to ensure children were in school? Members were informed that the attendance team had been very active and a lot of work had been done with various communities to ensure they understand the importance of getting children to school. Statistical data was kept on school attendance including a breakdown by ethnic groups and this could be provided to the Committee.
- Members were advised that there was a new national funding formula for schools being developed which would change the way funding for EAL would be allocated to Local Authorities. There had been consultation and a strong representation from Peterborough had gone forward to Nick Gibb MP Minister for Schools regarding the specific issues faced by Peterborough. The needs of the city were being more recognised and hopefully this would mean additional funding. The results of the new funding formula would be announced in the New Year. The Committee would be advised of the outcome when announced.

## **ACTIONS**

The Committee requested that the Assistant Director for Education and Resources:

1. Provide an action plan showing all the initiatives for short term and long term strategies for raising attainment across the city. The action plan to include examples of working with other authorities.
2. Provide a briefing note to the Committee on school attendance.
3. Provide a briefing note to the Committee when the outcome of the new funding formula had been announced.

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## **9. Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

## **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the Forward Plan and requested further information on the following key decisions:

- Hampton Community School – KEY/07OCT/11
- Peterborough's Transport Partnership Policy for pupils aged 4-16 years – KEY/01NOV/11
- Review of Play Centres in Peterborough – KEY/09OCT/11



**10. Work Programme**

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2010/11 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

**ACTION AGREED**

To confirm the work programme for 2010/11 and the Scrutiny Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.

**11. Date of Next Meetings**

16 January 2012

CHAIRMAN  
Times Not Specified