

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Present: Councillors B Saltmarsh (Chair), Harper, B Rush, J Peach, J Shearman, J Yonga.

Also present

Andrew Brown	Education Co-optee
Alistair Kingsley	Independent Co-opted Member
Hani Mustafa	Youth Council Representative
Oliver Sainsbury	Youth Council Representative

Officers in Attendance:	Wendi Ogle-Welbourn	Corporate Director, People and Communities
	Jonathan Lewis	Service Director for Education, People Resources and Corporate Property
	Lou Williams	Service Director, Children's Services and Safeguarding
	Gary Perkins	Head of School Improvement
	Belinda Evans	Complaints Manager, Corporate Complaints Service
	Paulina Ford	Senior Democratic Services Officer
	Karen S Dunleavy	Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fower. Apologies for absence were also received from the Education Co-optees Miranda Robinson and Stewart Frances, Education Co-optee Andrew Brown was in attendance as a substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

3. Minutes of meetings held on 20 July 2015

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 July 2015 were agreed 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. Children's (Social Care) Services Statutory Complaints Process (Children act 1989) Annual Report 2014/2015

The Complaints Manager, Corporate Complaints Service, introduced the report which provided Members with an overview of the Children's Social Care Services statutory complaints process for 2014/15.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members sought clarification over the figures on page 17 of the report where there were 76 partially upheld and upheld complaints listed, but on page 43 there had only been 12 cases listed and whether the 12 cases were in relation to complaints that required action? *Members were informed that the 12 cases on page 43 were the cases where a service improvement had been identified and represented only a small proportion of the complaints that were upheld where there might not have been a service improvement identified that could be rolled out across the department.*
- Members asked whether the complaints referenced within the report, which had pointed to the accuracy and timeliness of conference minutes, had been a result of not enough back office support and training undertaken? *Members were informed that where a child was subject to a child protection plan, the conference minutes were produced by a social worker or independent reviewing officer. Following a recent review of the conference minute taking process, it had been highlighted that the option of business support to take on these duties would provide a significant impact in terms of increased support. In terms of the training to resolve the issues highlighted, the Assistant Director Children's Social Care now holds a quarterly meeting with all team managers in order to review and implement improvements identified from complaints..*
- Members sought clarification over the statement made within the report in regards to the decrease of upheld complaints of 31% in 2013/2014 to 20.5% in 2014/2015 and the reasons behind the reduction? *Members were informed that services were being more robustly delivered, which had contributed to the reduction in complaints fully upheld. In addition Members were also advised that issues were being resolved at an earlier stage of the complaints process.*
- Members sought clarification over the summary of responses in relation to 112 complaints raised and what barriers were being experienced for PCC in reaching an 80% or 90% completion rate? *Members were advised that when a complaint had been sent to the service managers, in some cases there had been a delay in the receipt of a quick response, which had been due to managers trying to balance other priorities.*

The Chairman thanked the Complaints Manager for a comprehensive report and for providing assurance that PCCs complaints policy was effective.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee considered and noted the report.

6. Presentation Of 2015 Unvalidated Examination Results

The Service Director for Education, People Resources and Corporate Property introduced a report which provided Members with a summary of Peterborough schools' Unvalidated Examination Results for 2015. Members were advised that the results were provisional and were liable to change by the time of final reporting in January/March 2016. Members were also informed that Peterborough City Council had been rated 64 out of 152 authorities nationally for the proportion of schools being judged good or better rate by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OfSTED), which was above the national average. The Head of School Improvement also highlighted to Members that there had been an update to the report which had seen an increase in the proportion of pupils making the expected rate of progress at the end of Key Stage 4 in English from 72 to 73%.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented that it was reassuring that the local average in education attainment had been improved for Peterborough.

- Members asked what upgrade in the final results had been expected across schools and what could be implemented for those schools that had achieved slightly worse results as anticipated. *Members were advised that 11 congratulation letters had been sent to the schools that achieved high standards. Members were also advised that warning notices to improve had been sent to schools that had under achieved, and for some, official notice of formal warning of intervention. In addition, further support would be provided to the schools that had underachieved. However, the LA would continue to challenge them in order to raise standards. Members were also informed that recent research had demonstrated that early intervention had positively encouraged schools to improve in respect of the key stage levels 2, 2b and 3 at Key Stage 1. For some pupils, the improvements made had also started to feed into their secondary school education, especially where there had been demographic challenges such as a pupil's first language not being English.*
- Members asked how the level of investment for key stage 1 would feed into the key stage 2 results? *Members were informed that the results had improved rapidly for key stage 1, which was anticipated to correlate to the key 2b level. The improvements demonstrated that there had been a higher quality of teaching standards being delivered.*
- Members asked how effective the Council's communication was in the event that they had to intervene following a school's poor OfSTED outcome? *Members were advised that the Council's relationship with schools was second to none and that the Council were very clear on the intervention documentation shared with schools and the actions required for improvement.*
- Members commented that despite feelings in parts of the City that schools were not performing well, the chart on page 52 of the report had demonstrated that attainment, progress and good OfSTED results show a significant improvement in City schools over the past three years.
- Members sought clarification over the chart on page 50, which had detailed attainment results and asked whether the provisional figures had been provided by schools. *Members were advised that there had been a three stage process to obtain the provisional results. The first stage had involved the completion of a Department for Education (DfE) table by all schools, which would outline what schools expected their results to be, which would include data relating to all children. The second stage involved the DfE publishing the statistical first release of provisional data. The third stage was the final result with the relevant and necessary data included, which would be in accordance with DfE guidelines. This may involve the removal of some data in relation to children that were not required to be included within the schools figures.*
- Members sought clarification over whether Academy schools were precluded from receiving formal warning notices as they were not LA maintained schools. *Members were advised that formal warning notices were attached to maintained schools. The LA did not hold direct control over an Academy as these were accountable to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). However, the LA could write a warning letter to an Academy, even though it held no legal standing. The LA would also liaise with the RSC over the Academy's poor performance to highlight concerns.*
- Members asked whether the intake capacity of a secondary school that had not performed well would adversely affect the overall LA results. *Members were informed that there were a number of schools with capacity ranges and the implication of a large school's low results could impact the overall results for the LA.*
- Members commented that they looked forward to the fully validated results and were confident that Officers were in control of managing the schools that had not performed well.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report.

7. Draft School Organisation Plan 2015/20 - Delivering Local Places For Local Children

The Service Director for Education, People Resources and Corporate Property, introduced the report which outlined the draft school organisation plan for 2015/20. The report outlined the ongoing strategy for meeting the statutory requirement for school places in Peterborough.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented that there had been a problem in the facilitation of school places in the PE1 area of Peterborough, which was outlined on pages 80 and 81 of the report where there was a need for 172 school places for four year old children. Members also asked how the situation would be monitored, reviewed and what weight the issue stood in terms of planning application consideration. *Members were advised that the PE1 area of Peterborough had always provided a challenge in terms of school place provision. This had been due to a very transient population, however, there had been extra school places recently made in available through Gladstone Primary and Fulbridge Academy schools in order to meet the high demand. Members were also advised that the team would continue to closely monitor the situation for the future and would feed into planning applications and the planning site allocation documents as consultees. This would also involve objecting to planning applications where appropriate.*
- Members sought clarification over how the team would predict if a household was likely to be classified as a house of multiple occupation. *Members were advised that there had not been an exact science, but some areas of the City had generated more children than others, however, the team had been able to keep track of the situation.*
- Members commented on a good comprehensive report, which enabled the LA to build a picture of what was required in terms of school places for the next five years in Peterborough.
- Members asked how the LA had changed their measurements in terms of forecasting for school places. *Member were advised that the forecast results had been transferred to an in house service as the Cambridge service had become unreliable. There had also been a number of data sets utilised such as General Practitioner registrations, birth data, national census and new housing development plans. Members were also advised that the most challenging calculation to predict was the future reception intake.*
- Members asked how many extra school places the LA were required to find during August 2015. *Members were advised that the final figures were currently being gathered and that to date there had been 360 new applications for school places for children moving into Peterborough. The team were also currently working on the school leaver figures. In addition, Members were advised that the forthcoming budget setting process was anticipated to show where the provision of school places required, would provide a challenge. Members were also informed that there were plans in place to mitigate any shortage in statutory school provision if required, such as the use of mobiles units.*
- Members sought clarification over why the opening of the University Technical College (UTC) had been deferred and whether the facility was indeed required in the City? *Members were advised that the decision to defer the opening was made due to the insufficient take up of students. Members were also informed that pupils would enter UTC at age 14 and that the curriculum on offer had differed to mainstream schools, which was considered a leap of faith for parents.*

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee endorsed the Draft School Organisation Plan 2015/20 and recommended that the document was submitted to Cabinet for approval.

8. Recruitment And Retention Of Qualified Social Workers In Children's Services

The Service Director, Children's Services and Safeguarding introduced the report which outlined the ongoing challenge of recruiting qualified social workers and the strategic approach being taken to reduce the reliance on qualified social workers by recruiting alternatively qualified workers. The report also outlined the impact of the capped social worker fees, introduced across Local Authorities in the Eastern Region.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked whether the LA had any other choice in terms of social worker recruitment? Members were advised that every child on a child protection plan or looked after would continue to be allocated a social worker, however there is some flexibility about the type of qualification needed for working with Children in Need. Until now, the expectation in Peterborough is that all Children in Need were allocated qualified social workers, but we have not been in a position to recruit enough permanent qualified social workers to fill all our social worker posts. *Members were also informed that staff such as nursery nurses and experts in child development had experienced better outcomes for looked after children in understanding their needs. Recent experience had also demonstrated that families found that the non-social worker approach was less intrusive in meeting their needs. It had also been anticipated that the proposed approach would also reduce the number of caseloads for social workers due to the fact that child protection cases had always been treated as a priority.*
- Members asked whether there would be the same work pressure anticipated for social workers when the integration of alternative workers had been implemented? *Members were advised that there were rules that applied to how many cases newly qualified social workers could take on which included the amount of supervision and development required. It was anticipated that this approach should not apply to alternative workers and would not impact in the same way. In terms of supervision of the alternative worker role, care would need to be taken not to overload team managers and it was anticipated that advanced practitioners would also share the supervision responsibilities.*
- Members welcomed the creativity of the proposed social workers posts, however, requested that consideration should be given to using the post title 'alternatively qualified workers.
- Members sought clarification over the work alternatively qualified workers would undertake and whether the role would replace the reliance on agency social workers. *Members were advised that it is estimated that there were 400 children in need that would be appropriate to allocate to alternatively qualified workers. This group of children and young people would no longer be allocated to qualified social workers and this would reduce our reliance on agency staff.*
- Members asked whether there would be clear training and management support provided for alternatively qualified workers. *Members were informed that the decision regarding the type of workload that alternative workers undertook, would be made by team managers following an assessment carried out by a qualified social worker. In addition, there would be an intense induction programme for alternatively qualified workers to undertake. Agency social workers would stay in place until the transition of casework was underway.*
- Members asked whether there had been marketing data to indicate whether the alternatively qualified worker roles would be easy to recruit to. *Members were informed that an advert had recently been placed for team support workers, which received 80 applications, resulting in the recruitment of 15 staff. Members were advised that the figures provided were considered a good recruitment rate.*

- Members asked whether using alternatively qualified workers was a unique idea to Peterborough and what the PCC qualified social workers views were over this approach? *Members were informed that other LAs were using alternatively qualified workers and some were ahead of others in terms of the process. There had been national recognition of what tasks alternatively qualified workers and qualified social workers should undertake. Members were also advised that permanent social worker staff welcomed the alternative arrangements as there was a need to recruit permanent staff.*
- Members sought clarification over whether there would be a shortage of alternatively qualified workers if other LAs started to use the same posts to cover child in need caseloads? *Members were informed that there seemed to be sufficient capacity within the market for the alternatively qualified workers and it was not perceived as an issue for the future. In addition Members were advised that the alternatively qualified workers were local with local commitments as opposed to the position of many qualified agency social workers, who often come from further afield.*
- Members commented that there had been a precedence set in schools in respect of the level and experience of teaching assistants compared to the standards years ago and asked whether there would be work undertaken with other LAs to set a similar precedence for alternatively qualified worker posts? *Members were informed that the career structure for the alternatively qualified worker posts required attention, however, the LA needed to concentrate on undertaking a six month pilot to understand whether the key objectives of the project had been met. Members were also informed that recent research had shown that PCC needed to ensure that career pathways were available for the alternatively qualified staff and a piece of work was to be commissioned to explore the options that could be available to produce a training programme.*
- Members asked about the progress of web site development in order to attract interest from potential candidates to alternatively qualified worker vacancies. *Members were informed that a meeting was due to be held with web developers to discuss the Council's requirements. The recruitment web page format was intended to replicate the Teach Peterborough web infrastructure. The recruitment campaign would also be marketed through social media.*
- Members commented in regards to the impact of sensible capping fees of agency social workers, which came into force in April 2015 in the Eastern Region. *Members were informed that although a fee cap had been agreed for the Eastern Region, there had been a clause placed in the agreement, which respected the rates that agency social workers were receiving in current placements. This meant that those agency social workers that had been paid at the higher rate than the capped fee, were not vacating their placements.*
- Members commented that they appreciated the work the Council had undertaken to reduce the issues of social worker retention and recruitment.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed that further progress reports were to be provided to the Committee on a quarterly basis.
2. The Committee also requested that consideration be given to change the title of unqualified workers to alternatively qualified workers.

At this point the meeting adjourned for a five minute comfort break.

9. OfSTED Report - Update To Scrutiny In Relation To Publication Of Inspection Of Children's Services

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, Section 100A, paragraphs 2 and 3 this agenda item was held in a closed session in order to discuss confidential information

contained within a report furnished to the Council by a Government department, namely OfSTED upon terms, which forbid the disclosure of the information to the public.

9:06pm at this point Councillor Shearman left the meeting and members of the public and press returned for the next item, Forward Plan of Executive Decisions.

10. Forward Plan of Executive Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, 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 Forward Plan and where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions.

11. Work Programme 2015-2016

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2015/16 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee confirmed the work programme for 2015/16.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.11pm

CHAIRMAN