



**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 MARCH 2016**

Present: Councillors Saltmarsh (Chairman), Fower, Rush, Peach, Harper and Yonga.

Cabinet Member: Councillor Coles

Also present: Alistair Kingsley, Independent Co-opted Member  
Miranda Robinson, Church of England Representative  
Stuart Francis, Parent Governor

Officers in Attendance: Wendi Ogle Welbourn, Corporate Director People and Communities  
Gary Perkins, Head of School Improvement  
Lou Williams, Service Director Children's Services and Safeguarding  
Pat Carrington, Principal/Head of Post 16  
Ian Phillips, Social Inclusion Manager  
Councillor Thulbourn, Chairman of Design and Implementation Group  
Alison Stuart, Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services  
Karen S Dunleavy, Democratic Services Officer

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Shearman, Councillor Jamil was in attendance as substitute.

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

There were no declarations of Interests or whipping declarations.

**3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 January 2016**

The minutes of the meetings held on 18 January 2016 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to the correction of Miranda Robinson's surname being recorded correctly.

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

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

**5. Presentation Of 2015 Final and Validated Assessment Results By Pupil Characteristics for EYFS, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2**

The Head of School Improvement introduced the report which summarised the 2015 final and validated assessment results by pupil characteristics for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS – Reception Year – YR), Key Stage 1 (Y1 and Y2) and Key Stage 2 (Y6). Members were also advised that the KS4 results by pupil characteristics (validated) were not yet available they were due to be published on 29 March 2016 by OfSTED, which was too late to report to this Committee.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented that the main strands of proportion data had been included within the report. Members asked about the Pupil Premium and English as an additional language (EAL) academy and how the strategies would become embedded and broader across all schools in the city? *The Head of School Improvement advised Members that the Authority would need to demonstrate that the Pupil Premium and EAL strategies had been successfully implemented in schools in order to retain the funding and demonstrate whether the strategies had been value for money.* Members were also advised that regardless of any funding review conducted, the Authority would continue to make arrangements for Pupil Premium to disadvantaged groups and EAL should be self-sustained by teachers in schools.
- Members asked whether there had been any specific data of EAL learners in the strategy that stood out and whether there had been improvements the authority could make? *The Head of School Improvement advised the Pakistani heritage group of EAL learners had increased, but not in terms of attracting membership for school governors.*
- Members commented about Peterborough's education development and the success rate and asked when the Authority anticipated that the education gap would be closed? *The Head of School Improvement advised Members that the gap would be closed as soon as the progress could speed up. Headteachers, Teachers and Governors also had an important role to champion the education progress required to close the gap.*
- Members commented that it seemed to be difficult for schools to close the gap and that there may be other reasons in addition to strong leadership that had contributed to not meeting the expectations sooner. *The Head of School Improvement advised Members that both strong leadership and good teaching were important in schools in order to close the gap in addition to holding those responsible to account for low performance.*
- Members asked why some cohorts had appeared at the bottom of the scale in closing the gap performance figures? *The Head of School Improvement advised that performance was dependant on good teaching to make a difference in closing the gap and that trends had improved over time, which had demonstrated that education for Peterborough was heading in the right direction. The Authority needed to ensure that support systems implemented for schools would be replicated and that rigour was maintained in order to attain success across the City to close the gap.*
- Members commented whether there had been education issues for those children that had not attended nurseries or playgroups prior to joining primary education. *The Head of School Improvement advised Members that education outcomes for children that had attended a pre-school experience had made a difference and that it was an avenue that the Authority planned to promote school readiness and set a level that pre-school children should be at. Members were also advised that there needed to be a joined up approach for nursery and schools.*
- Members commented that there had been mixed heritage children in attendance at local schools where parents had stated that their children had already undertaken some of the lessons in their own country. Members asked why the Authority had performed poorly in the national league for education attainment as well as globally? *The Head of School Improvement advised Members that the Authority's education aspirations needed to focus on what qualifications and skills businesses required from potential employees and aimed to provide the education opportunities appropriately.*
- Members asked how schools could encourage children to speak the English language at home that they had learnt on a school day? *The Head of School Improvement advised that it had been important for pupils to become conversant in*

*studies using the language spoken at home and then the English speaking skills would develop over time. Members were also advised that there should be an opportunity provided for all to learn English and that some children in Peterborough were phenomenal linguists.*

- Members commented that the Pupil Premium (PP) should be properly allocated for EAL and asked whether the PP funding was allocated elsewhere by schools? *The Head of School Improvement advised that there had been a desire by some schools to use PP funding in a more targeted way such as on EAL for adults. The funding was introduced to support students that were disadvantaged, however, there had been a feeling that too much funding was used on staff, rather than on, for example, warm clothes and high quality books for disadvantaged children and further research was required in this area to ascertain where the funding support had been utilised.*
- Members commented that it had appeared that one reason the Authority seemed to struggle to close the education gap was due to the breakdown between parent and teachers and asked whether the governing body could provide any influence on improvement measures by encouraging better communications between home and school? *The Head of School Improvement advised that it had been important to encourage better communication between schools and home and that this could be driven by strong leadership through the governing body.*
- Members asked what the Authority's position was on ensuring schools improved communication links between home and school? *The Head of School Improvement advised that the parent body would need to raise issues with the school if they felt that communication had not been properly conducted. The Authority could only encourage good communication between school and home and would only become involved in an issue if a complaint had been raised against a school.*
- Members commented that the performance figures in appendix 5 of the report in relation to the any other white background had shown a poor result and asked which improvements listed in paragraph 5.8 of the report would be put in place for this particular group? *The Head of School Improvement advised that in terms of the scores it had been demonstrated that the Authority had made some improvements. It had also been recognised that although improvements were made in areas such as reading skills for other white background pupils across all year groups there was further work to be done. High priority schools had been identified to ensure that improvements were replicated across all schools in the City.*
- Members asked for examples of what initiatives the Authority had undertaken to make improvements across all vulnerable groups in the City as outlined in the report? *The Head of School Improvement advised that the Authority had improved data capture by school leaders and teachers and know how to retrieve the information required. It was anticipated that significant improvements would be seen in 17/18.*
- Members asked why the Key Stage 4 data had not been presented at the meeting? *The Head of School Improvement advised that there had been a timing issue in terms of when the results were released by Department for Education (DfE) and when the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities meeting was due to be held.*
- Members asked that where some schools were scored as outstanding by OfSTED whether these were the highest performing schools in Peterborough? *The Head of School Improvement advised that it was not always the case as school situations changed over time.*

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

### **The Committee:**

- Analysed the performance in the 2015 assessments;

- Scrutinised People and Communities actions to improve 2015/16 performance; and
- Supported the People and Communities leaders in challenging and intervening in schools where performance is inadequate.

## 6. Skills Strategy

The Principal/Head of Service City College Peterborough introduced a report to Members on the draft Peterborough Skills Strategy, which Members were requested to recommend for approval at Cabinet.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked whether the city-wide approach statement outlined on page 37, paragraph 5.1 of the report was accurate? *The Principal/Head of Post 16 confirmed that the statement should state that there was no city-wide approach to the post 16 and adults schools agenda.*
- Members complemented the Officer on an excellent report and asked whether the key areas for skill development of business growth would be dominant from the public sector? *The Principal/Head of Post 16 advised that the main challenges had been to engage with local business, within the timeframe. Members were also advised that Opportunity Peterborough and Local Chamber of Commerce had been engaged in order to strengthen the skills for local businesses by forming a sub-committee to encourage a more partnered approach to improve the representation of what is required by local businesses.*
- Members asked whether the City College intended to work in joined up way with primary and secondary schools in order to improve the outcome for children at risk of growing up with no education prospects? *The Principal/Head of Post 16 advised that discussions were being held to explore a more joined up approach to education schools at an earlier stage and had identified the sector led pathways in order to provide a route for pupils career journey.*
- Members asked how confident the college was over the performance of the Skills Strategy action plan? *The Principal/Head of Post 16 advised Members that the college had developed a report mechanism for all groups involved in the plan and that progress updates would be fed through to the Skills Board and the Health and Well Being Programme Board.*
- Members asked whether the approach would be maintained up to a 12 month period? *The Principal/Head of Post 16 confirmed that the college was very enthusiastic and would maintain the approach to complete the task.*

## RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommended that there was more involvement in consulting with local businesses going forward to undertake the actions included in the Skills Strategy.

## AGREED ACTION

The Committee endorsed the Skills Strategy for approval by Cabinet and also agreed that the wording at paragraph 5.1 of the covering report should be amended to state that there was no city-wide approach to the post and adult skills agenda.

## 7. Children and Families Joint Commissioning Board Achievement Report

The Service Director Children's Services and Safeguarding introduced the report which summarised the activities and achievements of the Children and Families Joint Commissioning Board during 2015/16.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented on the further £1.5m from the Government to address the national priority to support mental health issues.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Committee noted the contents of the report and suggested that a further summary report be presented in 12 months' time as a briefing note under the alternative governance system.

### **8. Outline Child Poverty Strategy**

The Social Inclusion Manager introduced the report to the Committee, which outlined the Child Poverty Strategy, and requested that the Committee note the next steps for developing the strategy and make any initial observations or recommendations.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented on page 89 of the report in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and the latest reforms and asked how the strategy dealt with the pinch points highlighted for schools? *The Service Director Children's Services and Safeguarding advised that the aim was to provide clear support and advice to schools and partners on how to effectively resource support over the issues to tackle child poverty.*
- Members commented that there was a need to provide the right financial support as well as effective governing bodies in order to meet the requirements of the Poverty Strategy to support families. *The Service Director Children's Services and Safeguarding advised that there had been a good understanding of child poverty across the City, which would help to develop the Poverty Strategy. The issues for some children had been most significant where families were living in constant poverty. The Corporate Director People and Communities also advised Members that areas for development such as SEND would be allocated to a lead officer to take forward, which could involve exploring joined up funds and commissioning for services.*
- Members commented that there were many factors which contributed to the issues of poverty and asked about whether there had been any thought given to the amount of money lending companies and gambling establishments located in the City? *The Service Director Children's Services and Safeguarding advised Members that the Authority ensured that there were alternative options available such as encouraging credit unions that could provide affordable financial support and advice to families.*
- Members commented that poverty had been defined as families with an income of less than 60% of the average household income and asked what the actual average figure was? *The Social Inclusion Manager advised that the poverty household income was set at around £13k when using local household income data.. The Service Director Children's Services and Safeguarding also advised that the poverty figure was dependent on number of children in the house and other measures in order to capture all aspects.*
- Members commented on page 94 of the report in relation to the expensive housing and poor living conditions and asked how these properties were being identified? *The Social Inclusion Manager advised that the properties were identified through a broad range of intelligence that had been received by the Authority from partner agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Social Worker visits.*

- Members commented that some residents may feel that complaining about their property could cause repercussions for them and asked if there was a way that tenants could identify issues in a confidential way? *The Service Director Children's Services and Safeguarding advised that the Authority aimed to work with landlords to raise standards and improve properties, particularly through the Selective Licensing proposals..*
- Members asked about Pupil Premium funds and how it had been allocated in relation to poverty and asked how the Authority had captured projects within the Poverty Strategy such as the supermarkets provision of food boxes? *The Social Inclusion Manager advised that there were a number of initiatives such as food banks and Citizen Advice that had engaged with supermarkets and that there were around 2,000 residents in the last year that were able to access the services and receive help with the issues being experienced. The Chairman commented that volunteer organisations that provided support for families that experienced poverty should be congratulated for their dedication in supporting the community.*

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Committee approved the Outline Child Poverty Strategy as presented to Committee and agreed the plans for further development.

The Committee also asked for further information on the 18 indicators for tackling health inequalities for Peterborough which had ranked significantly better than the national average.

### **9. Service Director and Portfolio Overview Report: Children & Safeguarding, Including an Update On The Ofsted Action Plan**

The Service Director Children's Services and Safeguarding introduced the report to Members which provided an overview of the key activities within the portfolio of the Service Director for Children and Safeguarding, as well as providing a summary of key performance information in respect of Children's Social Care.

The report also provides a brief update on progress being made in relation to the action plan put in place following the findings of the OfSTED inspection of Children's Services in Peterborough, as published in the inspection report on 18 September 2015.

The Services Director Children's Services and Safeguarding also advised members that Social Worker caseloads had reduced to an average of 20. In addition, Members were advised that recent inspections of both short break homes, by OfSTED had resulted in both homes achieving 'Good'. .

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked whether the Authority sought Social Workers thoughts and opinions about the current social service provision in an anonymous way? *The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding advised that Social Workers had Regular opportunities to provide thoughts and opinions about services; The Social Work Forum provided a means by which social workers could convey their opinions to senior managers; this was chaired by the Principal Social Worker and consisted of representatives from most teams in the service. The Service Director and other senior officers also undertook regular case audits alongside social workers, which provide them with an opportunity to raise any issues directly with senior officers. In general, morale appeared to be generally positive. Members asked how the Authority was performing in relation to statistics for ethnic minority foster carers for Children in Care (CiC)? The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding advised Members that the population of foster carers did not match the Authority's diversity needs. There had*

*been a number of targeted recruitment drives but these had not had the hoped for success. The recruitment and retention of black and minority ethnic foster carers was a key performance target for the proposed Permanency Service. Members asked whether the statement in paragraph 4.38 of the report had alluded to the Authority not meeting the needs of children and young people adequately? The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding advised Members that there would always be a number of children that would require care arrangements; what is the 'right' number of children and young people in care can be difficult to specify but that current numbers in care in Peterborough are in line with statistical neighbours.*

- *Members commented over the statement in paragraph 4.44 of the report in relation to the accuracy and asked why the inaccurate figures were being included? The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding advised Members that the system could not cope with the timeline of when children came into care over a number of scenarios, which was why the figures were inaccurate. The figures had been included within the report in accordance with transparency.*
- *Members commented about transparency and asked what plans were in place to further expand on planned work to identify causes of high numbers of re-referrals and the timeliness of visits in line with good practice? The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding advised that there had been an initial audit of re-referrals that had identified that part of the reason for the high rate was that the service was not closing contacts down quickly enough; a contact open for more than 24 hours automatically became a referral, many of which would be closed down shortly after. If a subsequent referral was then made on the same child, this would then be a re-referral; however had the initial contact been closed down within the 24 hour period, then the second referral would not count as a re-referral. More work is necessary to identify the issues here, however, and further dip-samples of case decision making and audits would be taking place over coming months to explore the causes of this in more detail. Performance on visits is one that needs to improve and be sustained; there will always be some visits that do not take place – where children on child protection plans have left the country for example – but in most cases this was about managers having high expectations of the quality of practice by workers. current practice in terms of organising visits in a timely manner and work had been underway to put plans in place and holding services to account over the timeliness of visit issues currently being experienced. In addition an audit had identified that there had been an issue of when a decision was made to conduct a looked after child re-referral or whether the visit should have been a contact in the first place. The process would be reviewed and a recommendation put forward as to what good practice was, which would be fed back to this Committee in due course.*
- *Members commented about dental checks conducted for looked after children highlighted within the report, which had presented low performance figures and asked what had been put in place to improve the outcome? The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding advised Members that the performance result is reliant on carers telling Social Workers when dental checks had been conducted. Members were also advised that the relevant Heads of Service and Managers had been assigned to improve outcomes for dental checks, however, there were a number of older children that refused to attend a dentist appointment which provided an additional challenge.*
- *An amendment had been required at paragraph 4.4 of the report to note that the year should state November 2015.*
- *The Cabinet Member for Children's Services commented that it had been positive to see consistent improvement across most areas in Children's Services since the recent OfSTED inspection, and while there was still more to do, the progress made in general was encouraging.*

## **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the contents of the report and requested:

1. To be supplied with the number of Looked After Children that were placed outside of the City; and
2. An update to be included in a report later in the year to outline the outcome of the review and recommendation for practice improvements in conducting re-referrals and timeliness of CiC visits.

The Committee would review the OfSTED action plan once it had been formally updated at a Scrutiny Committee later in the year, subject to the Governance procedure after May 2016.

## **10. Alternative Governance**

The Chairman of Design and Implementation Group introduced the report to Members on the next steps for the Alternative Governance system following Council's decision on 27 January 2016 to confirm its earlier decision to adopt a hybrid model of governance to take effect from the Annual Council meeting in May 2016.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented on the reduction of the topics for Scrutiny Committees through the new Alternative Governance system and asked whether there would be a greater onus on the Committee workload? *The Chairman of Design and Implementation Group advised Members that the Committees workload and function would change to an Overview Scrutiny and that most reports would be presented in a traffic light format. Members were also advised that the aim of the Alternative governance system was to involve Scrutiny at an earlier stage of the decision making process. The system would also encouraged a more intense concentration to issues such as education development in order to drive change.*
- Members commented that the new Alternative Governance system seemed to be a more logical way to conduct Council business, which would provide an opportunity to become involved in the decision making process at an earlier stage. Members asked where Scrutiny Committees would be provided with the opportunity to discuss topics in an in-depth way when the workload would so be condensed? *The Chairman of Design and Implementation Group, advised that the traffic light system would allow the Committee to call issues for scrutiny where the service performance was at risk of underperformance. Members were also advised that Minority reports would also become a significant part of the decision making function.*
- Members of the Committee that were not Councillors would continue to be involved in the Scrutiny process.
- Members commented that there should be priority topics identified for each meeting and that it would be important to develop a clear definition of what was expected from Committee in order to focus on what the key strands were. *The Chairman of Design and Implementation Group advised that the Scrutiny Committee would focus on digging deep into certain areas of Authority services, which would be strictly set for the year in a more structured way. It was up to the Committee to develop the key areas of focus for the year.*
- Members commented that consideration should be given to provide the training session in the daytime.
- Members asked what was the planned time of day to hold Scrutiny Committee meetings? *The Chairman of Design and Implementation Group advised Members that there had been suggestions for both day and evening training sessions. Members were advised that the meeting times would be dependent on Cabinet and*



*when decisions were due to be taken. Members were also advised that reports would be directorate driven, however the system would ensure that items would not need to be presented to lots of different Committees.*

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

That the Committee:

1. Noted the update on the outcome of the Scrutiny Workshops;
2. Noted the actions to be taken following the Annual Council meeting in May 2016 to embed the hybrid model and in particular to advise Scrutiny Members of the impact of those proposals on their work programme; and
3. Commented on the induction programme.

## **11. 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 reviewed the Forward Plan and requested confirmation over whether the 'Vivacity Premier Fitness Invest to Save Scheme' non key decision item was intended for consideration by the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee and asked to be provided with the reasons why it had been assigned to the Committee.

The chairman thanked the Committee for their work throughout the year.

7:00pm – 9:03

CHAIRMAN