

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING
HELD AT 7.00PM, ON
MONDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2023
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillors Shaheed (Chair), Hemraj (Vice Chair), Asif, Cole, Fenner, Lane, Rangzeb, Warren and Independent Co-opted Member Sameena Aziz.

Officers Present: John Gregg, Executive Director Children and Young People's Service
Gary Jones, Service Director Children's Social Care and Targeted Support, Madia Afzal, Democratic Services Officer and Charlotte Cameron, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: Councillor Jackie Allen, Cabinet Advisor for Children's Services.

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ahmed, Lane and Statutory Co-opted Member Peter French.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

No declarations of interest or whipping declarations were received.

13. MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY MEETING HELD ON 20 JULY 2023

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Meeting held on 20 July 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

14. SUPPLEMENTARY APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS 2023/24

15. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the appointment of Co-opted Members in accordance with the Council's Constitution Part 3, Section 4 – Overview and Scrutiny Functions.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval from the Committee to appoint Sameena Aziz as a Non-Voting Co-opted Member for the municipal year 2023/24 to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Part 3, Section 4 – Overview and Scrutiny Functions.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and explained that the nominations for Parish Council Co-opted Members had been put forward by the Parish Council Liaison Committee (PCLC) and that the appointments would be

reviewed annually.

The Committee unanimously agreed to the appointment of Sameena Aziz as a Non-Voting Co-opted Member for the municipal year 2023/24.

The Chair welcomed the Co-opted Member who was in attendance and invited them to join the committee for the rest of the meeting.

It was noted that Parish Councillor Katie Howard had been nominated by PCLC but could not be at the meeting. Her co-option would be formalised at the next meeting.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to make the following appointments:

1. Appoint Sameena Aziz as a Co-opted Member with no voting rights to represent the Muslim Community for the municipal year 2023/2024. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year.

16. CLARE LODGE UPDATE

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the work of Clare Lodge.

The report sought to provide the Committee with an update on the recent Ofsted inspection, which was undertaken at Clare Lodge as well as the current financial position.

The Executive Director Children and Young People's Service introduced the report and key points raised included:

Members were advised that and Officers were happy to move straight to questions.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members requested that Officers provide them with some information on early years services and school readiness for pupils starting primary school in September, and the assessment from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum delivered through nurseries and childminder settings.
- Members queried whether children would be ready to go to school based on statutory frameworks followed in these settings.
- Members asked how the autism strategy would deal with awareness and increased provisions for autism needs in schools. The Officer advised that there had been shared concerns and the report would be looked into at a future meeting.
- Members queried how relationships and sex education sat within children services and how the service had monitored what had been taught in schools in terms of an age-appropriate curriculum. Members were advised that a presentation on roles and responsibilities in relation to education may be necessary.
- Legislative changes had created a fragmented approach to the education system, and it had been recognised that the landscape for the education system was staggered. The Officer further advised that a motion had been put forward for council in which officers and members can consider this further.
- Members sought clarification on whether this was in relation to the curriculum for Sex and Relationship Education (SRE). The Officer advised that the report would explore issues around sexuality and gender

and provide guidance in schools.

- Members advised that SRE guidance would be published by the government and link into statutory duties such as relationships with schools and academies.

Members queried whether there would be guidance to ensure pupils mental health would be catered for and considering parent's views on this.

- The Officer echoed and supported the point and identified that short term funding in relation to mental health in the context of schools would give additional resources in September.
- Members referred to the point about the fragmented nature of the education system and the number of catholic schools within Peterborough with St John Fishers Catholic High School being the only voluntary aided and LA (Local Authority) school in the city. Members queried what the capacity was to support a school that had not yet become an academy.
- Members were advised on the challenging landscape for schools in terms of the role of the LA, the role of multi-academy trusts and the role of staff within schools. The Officer noted the number of responsibilities that remain statutory with the funding involved and mentioned the roles being transferred into multi-academy trust and the funding that has gone with them.
- The arrangements that are in place are succeeding and would help support schools and children's life.
- Members referred to previous questions and requested that current guidance be brought to future meeting with foresight being given to members in order for appropriate questions to be prepared. The Officer advised that new statutory guidance would be available for the autumn and written briefing on current arrangements could be made for Members that have interest.
- The Officer further advised that there had been a motion on this topic put forward to Council.
- Members queried about schools funding with the 6.5% increase to pay and how Children's Services could support school budgets with only 3.5% being funded by the government. The Officer advised that funding arrangements are complex, and money is managed by head teachers, school forums and stakeholders. The Officer further advised that money could be provided to fulfil statutory responsibilities and was not aware of any funding from the LA to bridge the 3% gap.
- Members questioned early year education and care with the shortage of places in nurseries and how this would be addressed. Members were advised that officers were not aware of concerns at early years and the 2006 Children Act placed requirements on LA to provide sufficient provision. The Officer would be able to provide a written response.
- Members queried about the report for early help offer due in November pending appointment of head of service and the progress on the appointment. The Officer noted that there had been progress with the appointment and was pleased that the early help service had been launched.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note

1. Consider the report and agree agenda items for the committee for the 2023/24 work programme.
2. Members request further information as required, and additional items for work programme.

The Committee also requested that Officers:

- Add Early Year Foundation Stage and school readiness to the work programme.
- Add the Autism Strategy to the work programme and include information on increased provision.
- Provide a report on sexuality and gender guidance in schools after the guidance was received from National Government.
- Provide a briefing note on nursery and early years placement provision.

17. PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES OF EARLY HELP SUPPORT REPORT

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the performance and outcomes of Early Help support. The report was requested by the Children's and Education Scrutiny Committee following their group representative meeting.

The purpose of this report was to update the Committee on the performance and outcomes of Early Help support in Peterborough.

The Service Director Children's Social Care and Targeted Support accompanied by the Cabinet Advisor for Children's Services introduced the report and highlighted key items including:

Members were advised that there were two priority actions that arose from the visit, and they were detailed within the report.

Officers were happy to go straight to questions.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members referred to Appendix 2 on page 48 about the lack of focus on children's experiences and the impact of social work intervention. Members queried this position and how it could be mediated in the future.
- The Officer advised there would be a strengthened quality assurance and would be part of the improvement plan and referred to governance in place to ensure this would be strengthened.
- Members referred to page 37 and queried about the multi-agency workshop and audit tools that had been reviewed and amended. The Officer advised a briefing could be provided.
- Members referred to page 48 of the Ofsted report and queried what training would be put in place for the lack of understanding of contextual safeguarding across all agencies.
- The Officer advised that a CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) working group would be led by safeguarding partnership head of service and a strategic response would be under development around practice.
- The Officer noted about the number of children in youth justice service who would support children who come to the attention of Justice system. The department work closely with police to analyse data and not to criminalise children. There would be support programmes depending on the nature of offence.
- Clear data on criminal exploitation and quality assurance would be necessary to understand the service provided to children who are vulnerable and would be keen for feedback from children.
- Members queried the timeframe in which schools are being informed of the child coming to notice and noted that schools are a safe space for

children. The Officer advised that from front-door data schools were the highest referrals followed by police. There is a responsibility to feedback within 24 hours on referrals and make improvements.

- Partners are invited to strategy meetings where the child is deemed to be at significant risk. The Officer noted the importance of having feedback from schools.
- Members referred to page 37 and queried the outcome of the workshop from June 15 for frontline practitioners. The Officer advised that this workshop had not yet taken place and would go through the Children's Safeguarding Partnership board.
- Members referred to Appendix 2 page 46 and queried the reason for changes integrated in front-door policy, and how improvements would be made to any social work oversight to ensure a prompt and timely response using numerical data to assess the position pre and post Ofsted report.
- The Officer advised that there was a 2-day focus visit on a number of cases in which IT systems were tracked and gained feedback from social workers after each visit. This was a small sample and there was no evidence of children being left at risk.
- Members queried whether there was data to analyse and track within PCC (Peterborough City Council). The Officer advised that in law there is a 24-hour response time and there is timeliness of intervention. The Officer further advised that data could be shared later in the year.
- Members referred to page 46 and queried the identified concerns and whether they were addressed effectively within KPI (Key Performance Indicators) tolerances. The Officer advised there was a deep dive audit followed by an inspection and highlighted concerns that needed to be addressed in response to Ofsted plans.
- The Officer further advised that all working in IFD (Integrated Front Door) would be strengthening working documents and picking up quality assurance in line with the improvement plan.
- Members referred to page 32 of the Action Plan and questioned how improvement and professional curiosity would be objectively measured. The Officer advised that there would be no qualitative data, and professional curiosity would be picked up in audit.
- Members referred to page 45 and 46 on areas of improve from social practice and highlighted concerns for operational management and the lack of insight around the evaluation of monitoring at senior position. Members questioned what sort of changes are made at the senior level.
- The Officer advised that there would be training through the safeguarding partnership and had appointed an interim head of service to take forward the strategic plan. The governance chair independent partnership holds the account for the plan. The Officer further advised that resources had been focused on training and decisions making improvements.
- Members further questioned the changes to the work plan. The Officer advised it had been signed off by safeguarding partnership and senior leaders had looked at priority actions that needed improvement.
- Members questioned whether the strengths and weakness highlighted during the Ofsted visit were the usual course of action. The Officer advised that only full inspections included grading, not focus visits. There were 2 priority actions, and they would be responded to.
- Members further questioned what prompted the Ofsted visit. Members were advised that there would not always be a notification on a visit and that on the particular occasion mentioned there were no anonymous complaints.
- The Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services

further advised that the Inspection of Local Authority and Children's Services (ILACS) is a system of inspection and within a 3-year window it is expected to have a full ILACS, one to two focused visits and a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI). The Officer noted that Peterborough Children's Services was judged to be good in 2018 and now is deemed to be not good and therefore Peterborough will receive a standard ILACS inspection rather than a short inspection.

- Members referred to page 47 and the response to exploitation and questioned what actions the department had taken in keeping children safe and speeding the process up. The Officer advised there were shared services with CCC (Cambridgeshire County Council) that provide support and analyse the data of missing children to decrease length of exploitation, and there would be return home interviews to look at support needed. There had been a keen interest and close governance, so managers are aware of the improvements needed.
- The Officer further advises there had been strategy meetings for children who were at risks and the partnership are aware of priority action.
- Members queried the progress of the response to the action plan. The Officer advised strategic groups first meeting would be in August and there were reviews in place and would be revisiting the Terms of Reference for the scope for change. Development would take a number of months.
- The Officer further advises as part of the strategic group there would need to be data around demand management and develop an understanding to have a better view of what the demand would look like before September.
- Members queried about focusing on missing children and whether this would be working in isolation or with partner agency. The Officer advised that both had the same statutory partners and would be developing that forum and work out if additional partner work needed to take place. Each agency had its own role in diverting children away from criminal exploitation.
- Members referred to Appendix 2 and questioned what would cause online referrals to fail to reach the contact centre. The Officer noted the contact centre was the first point of contact and advised that reports would need to be strengthened with additional resources and increased support for referrals.
- The Officer noted that the contact centre had 7000 contacts in the last 6 months and it can be intensive and fast paced. Development on resources and refining the contacts had begun.

The Committee requested that the action points from the partnership safeguarding plan, broken down and what progress has been made within each action at each meeting as a standing item. Along with progress dates, each item RAG Rated and updates with multi-agency arrangements and responses to the children and young people.

The Executive Director advised that there would be an improvement notice from the Department for Education that would support the request and suggested that this be discussed in more detail after that notice had been received.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note

1. Comment on the report of the Integrated Front Door and the contents of the Ofsted Focused Visit inspection outcome letter at Appendix 1.
2. Endorse the action plan at Appendix 2 to improve areas of practice identified by Ofsted as requiring improvement.
3. Include in the work plan an opportunity to scrutinise the impact of the proposed action plan and to achieve the ambition to develop a consistently good service for children and families in all areas of practice at the Integrated Front Door.

The Committee also requested that Officers:

- Provide a briefing note on the multi-agency audit tools that were reviewed.
- Provide a briefing note on the internal data that shows the timeline of intervention after a referral.
- Discuss recommendation three 'Include in the work plan an opportunity to scrutinise the impact of the proposed action plan and to achieve the ambition to develop a consistently good service for children and families in all areas of practice at the Integrated Front Door' at the next Group Representatives meeting.
- Bring, as a standing item, the partnership safeguarding plan following the improvement notice from the Department for Education.

18. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN SERVICES AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES & PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT: INTEGRATED FRONT DOOR

The Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the report which considered the relevant items presented in 2023/24 of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee and looked at the work programme for the new municipal year 2023/24 to determine the Committees priorities. Members also noted the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

Members requested that a glossary of acronyms be created and emailed out to all members.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Considers items presented to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee during 2022/2023 and makes recommendations on the future monitoring of these items where necessary.
2. Determines its priorities and approves the draft work programme for 2023/2024 attached at Appendix 1.
3. Notes the Recommendations Monitoring Report attached at Appendix 2 and considers if further monitoring of the relevant recommendations made by the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee during 2022/2023 municipal year is required.
4. Notes the Terms of Reference for this Committee as set out in Part 3, Section 4, Overview and Scrutiny Functions and in particular paragraph 2.1 item 1 Children and Education Scrutiny Committee as attached at Appendix 3.

The Committee also requested that Officer create a glossary of acronyms.

19. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024

The Senior Democratic Officer introduced the report which included the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions containing decisions that the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the plan and where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

Members raised concerns about the items that related to Clare Lodge and Werrington Fields and requested that Officers provide an update on the progress of those decisions.

Members also referred to the request to receive a report on Clare Lodge and were advised that this was scheduled in the work programme for an upcoming meeting.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and **RESOLVED** to note the report.

The Committee also requested that Officers:

- Provide the Committee with an interim briefing note on Clare Lodge, with a main report to follow at the September meeting.
- Provide and update on the progress of the Werrington Fields decision.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as being 6 November 2023

CHAIR

Meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.23pm