

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON 11 MARCH 2013**

Present: Councillors S Day (Chairman), Harper, N Arculus, B Rush, J Shearman, D Fower

Also present Alastair Kingsley Parent Governor Representative
Councillor S Scott Cabinet Member Children's Services
Claire Rintoul MIND

Officers in Attendance: Sue Westcott Executive Director, Children's Services
Jonathan Lewis Assistant Director for Education and Resources
Jean Imray Assistant Director Safeguarding Families & Communities
Adrian Chapman Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Sandhu Head of Customer Services, SERCO
Belinda Child Strategic Housing Manager, PCC
Gary Perkins Head of School Improvement
Paulina Ford Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny
Ruth Griffiths Lawyer

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Saltmarsh.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of Interest or whipping declarations.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2013

The minutes of the meetings held on 7 January 2013 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. Update Following Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding

The report informed the Committee of the outcome of the recent Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding which had taken place from 28 January to 6 February 2013. The Executive Director of Children's Services presented the report and explained that she was pleased with the report and the improved rating of Adequate. Ofsted had informed the Director that it was a good Adequate rating. Members were informed of the key highlights from the inspection and that the inspection report had stated '*Lessons found from previous inspections have been taken seriously resulting in determined drive to address the identified deficiencies through rapid improvement*'. Areas for improvement had been identified in the report and an action plan would be put in place to address these. No children were found to be inadequately protected or at risk of significant harm at the time of the report. Members were informed that

improvement must be sustained and that this would be the future focus forever. A recommendation would be made to the Minister to lift the notice of improvement.

The Chair congratulated the Executive Director of Children's Services on the outcome of the inspection and recognised the hard work from all staff within Children's Services that had gone into achieving this.

The Executive Director for Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services acknowledged the increased support and involvement of the Scrutiny Committee in the Children's Services department over the past 18 months and thanked the Committee for its involvement in monitoring the improvement programme.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members sought clarification as to why the council had decided to put a 20% cap on the number of newly qualified social workers with the children's social care workforce. *The Assistant Director Safeguarding Families & Communities informed Members that whilst there was a need to have a pool of newly qualified social workers there was also a need to have the right balance of experience with qualified and newly qualified social workers. The 20% cap would ensure a constant supply of newly qualified social workers but also ensure that the remaining staff was not stretched because they were having to supervise and train new social workers.*
- What was the starting pay for a newly qualified social worker in Peterborough? *Members were informed that it was between £26K to £27K.*
- Members noted the areas for improvement in the inspection report and wanted to know if some of the areas of improvement were reliant on groups from outside of the council and if they had not co-operated with the Children's Services department in the way they should have. *Members were informed that those areas noted by Members related in the main to the Health profession. The inspection highlighted that the department needed to work more smartly and more closely with other agencies e.g. GP's, health visitors, paediatricians.*
- Members wanted to know if Primary and Secondary Schools could be made to use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). *Members were informed that schools did not have to use the CAF but were actively being encouraged to use the CAF. Schools were beginning to see the benefit of using the CAF.*
- Members had noted that the inspection report had requested that the annual complaints report be strengthened to ensure complaints and compliments about children's services clearly informed and supported improvements in the quality of practice. *Members were advised that this referred to the Corporate Complaints report not the Children's Services Statutory Complaints process. All comments had been noted and the Corporate Complaints report would be developed accordingly and made more robust.*
- Had the position of the Chair of Safeguarding Board been filled? *Members were informed that the position of the Chair of Safeguarding Board had now been filled by Russell Wate who was now in post.*
- Members wanted to know how confident the Executive Director was about addressing all the areas of improvement highlighted in the inspection report with the timeframe given by Ofsted. *Members were advised that everything that Ofsted had highlighted had already been identified and was already being worked on.*

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Committee noted the report and requested that:
 - (i) The new Ofsted action plan is presented to the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group for monitoring.
 - (ii) The Committee receive at each meeting an update on the progress of the new Ofsted action plan.

2. The Committee also requested that the Executive Director of Children's Services pass on congratulations and thanks to all staff in Children's Services from the Committee for all the hard work undertaken over the past 18 months to improve the service from an inadequate rating to an adequate rating.

6. Children's Services Improvement Programme

The report presented to the Committee gave an update on the Improvement Programme and informed the Committee of the refreshed Children's Services Delivery Plan. Previously there had been a separate delivery plan for each area of Children's Services. The refreshed Delivery plan was now one plan covering all areas of Children's Services with a vision of 'Helping Children to be their best'. The plan contained five priorities with a list of further priorities under each main priority. Each priority had an accountable lead officer.

The five priorities were:

- Providing Children and Families with early support
- Helping families with problems and keeping children safe
- Giving the best opportunities to children and young people in care
- Working with schools and others to make sure children succeed
- Supporting our staff to be outstanding

Members were informed that Looked after Children would be kept as a separate priority. There were no questions from the Committee and the Chair requested that the Committee be kept up to date on the progress of the new Children's Services Delivery Plan.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested that the Children's Services Delivery Plan be brought back to the Committee at each meeting to monitor progress.

7. Tackling Poverty in Peterborough

The Head of Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided the Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise the redrafted 'Peterborough Child and Family Poverty Strategy' and the progress that had been made towards tackling poverty in Peterborough. The strategy had been revised following on from a presentation of the Tackling Poverty report and action plan to the Committee in June 2012. The overarching strategy document had been redrafted to better reflect the conditions which needed to be addressed in Peterborough. The redrafted version had also been written to be more accessible and reader-friendly, and to be more explicit about the scale of the challenges being faced and the solutions being driven forward. Members were informed that the main focus going forward would be to address the impacts of Welfare Reform on the Poverty agenda. A Welfare Reform Action Group had been in place since August 2012 to try and understand the impact of Welfare Reform on the citizens of Peterborough and had put in place a series of measures to address the issues. From 2nd April there would be a launch of different measures and interventions that would provide practical ways of supporting people that might suddenly be faced with for example having to pay council tax for the first time.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members noted that one of the recommendations within the report was for the Committee to "agree that the work to tackle poverty in Peterborough is scrutinised by this committee overall at least annually, and that the partnerships, rather than lead councillors, drive the work forward between scrutiny meetings". Members sought clarification of the recommendation as it had been agreed at the meeting of the Committee on 23 July 2012

that each member of the Committee would become a lead Member for each of the seven strategic objectives within the Poverty Reduction Strategy. *The Head of Neighbourhood Services informed Members that whilst it had been agreed at the July 2012 meeting of the Committee that each member of the Committee would champion one of the seven strategic objectives within the Poverty Reduction Strategy it had not been very successful. Some lead officers had not been as proactive as others in engaging with lead Members.*

- Members were concerned that they would have less involvement in the Poverty Strategy going forward and suggested that if Members of the committee were no longer required as a lead Member for each of the seven strands then a small working group could be formed instead to work with the Head of Neighbourhood Services on the Poverty Strategy. This would ensure continued involvement with the Poverty Strategy from the Committee and enable better scrutiny.
- Members wanted to know if there was any money available to improve assessment waiting time in organisations such as MIND. *Members were informed that Government had made available to the Local Authority a sum of approximately £800,000 to mitigate some of the impacts of Welfare Reform. The intention was to focus that funding entirely on families and households that were at risk of poverty or already in poverty. A large part of that funding will go towards increasing capacity in organisations such as MIND, Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK Peterborough.*
- Members were concerned with the presentation of the strategy and the lack of benchmarking information. The strategy would be difficult to scrutinise and check progress going forward without this information. Members also requested that the strategy show more detailed information of the work being carried out to tackle poverty at ward level. *Members were informed that ward profile information could be provided. Members were also informed that there would be a package of information provided to all Councillors that would enable Councillors to assist people in their wards who may be affected by the impact of the benefit changes.*
- The Executive Director of Children's Services welcomed the Poverty Strategy but felt that the Poverty Action Plan was not detailed enough and needed more work to show clear indications of what was to be achieved and progress made with RAG ratings.
- Members suggested holding a conference with employers in the city to discuss paying a living wage.
- How well equipped was the council to deal with the impact of Welfare Reform. *Members were advised that the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) were citing the work that was being done by the Welfare Reform Action Group in Peterborough as exemplary. The DWP were committing significant time and effort to Peterborough's welfare provision offer. The £800,000 funding provided by Government was being spent on focussing on why families fell into poverty and crisis. It was being invested in preventative work, better quality advice and guidance where needed, training, advice and support for people in community organisations at street level. The Food Bank and Care Bank which was white goods recycling had also been signed up. It had been difficult to predict the exact number of people that would be affected. It had been estimated that there would be a reduction in benefits across Peterborough's households of approximately £35M to £38M under Welfare Reform.*
- How do you class poverty? *Members were advised that the most commonly used approach was relative income poverty. Each household's income, adjusted for family size, was compared to median income. (The median is the "middle" income: half of people have more than the median and half have less.) Those with less than 60 per cent of median income were classified as poor.*

The Chair thanked the Head of Neighbourhood Services for an informative presentation and acknowledged the challenges facing Peterborough ahead regarding tackling poverty.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Committee noted the report and requested that the Head of Neighbourhood Services:

- (i) Present to the Committee a report on the impact of Welfare Reform at the first meeting of the next municipal year in June 2013.
 - (ii) Provide an annual progress report to the Committee on Tackling Poverty in Peterborough.
 - (iii) Provide the Committee with ward specific information regarding poverty in each ward.
 - (iv) Provide the Committee with a more detailed action plan including clear indicators of what was to be achieved with timeframes, progress and RAG ratings and present back to the committee at the first meeting of the next municipal year in June 2013.
2. The Senior Governance Officer to email members of the Committee to ask for nominations to form a small working party to work with the Head of Neighbourhood Services on the Poverty Strategy.

8. Presentation of 2012 Validated Examination Results

The report summarised for the Committee the 2012 validated assessment and examination results for both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 and outlined the approach the Local Authority and Schools were taking to improve outcomes for pupils in Peterborough. The Assistant Director for Education and Resources and Head of School Improvement gave a presentation which provided an overview of the results in the report.

Key Stage 2 Overview

- English – 6% increase since 2010, 1% more than national and Statistical Neighbour increase;
- Reading – 3% increase since 2010, matching national and 1% more than Statistical Neighbours increase;
- Writing – 11% increase since 2010, 1% more than national and Statistical Neighbours increase;
- Maths – 3% increase since 2010, 2% less than national increase and 1% less than Statistical Neighbours increase.
- Expected Progress in English – 4% increase since 2010, 1% less than national increase and 2% less than Statistical Neighbours increase, but still above national average by 1% and SN average by 2%;
- Expected Progress in Maths – 2% increase since 2010, 2% less than national increase and 4% less than Statistical Neighbours increase. Performance is in line with Statistical Neighbours average but 1% below national average.

Group data received after the report had been written showed that for Key Stage 2 there were three distinct groups that were underachieving compared to other groups:

- Pupils for whom English was not their first language, children classed as white other, predominantly Eastern European
- Pakistani heritage children
- Free School Meal children

These groups were being focussed on in terms of commissioning external support.

Key Stage 4 Overview

- 5 A* - C including English & Maths – improved by 3% from 2010 but unchanged from 2011. Gap to national is 10% and to Statistical Neighbours is 9%;
- 5 A* - C – improved by 10% from 2010 and 3% from 2011. Gap to both national and Statistical Neighbours is closed, from 2% in 2010;
- Expected Progress in English – declined by 2% from 2010 and 2011. Gap to national is 7% and to Statistical Neighbours is 6% - both widened by 2% from 2010;

- Expected Progress in maths – improved by 7% from 2010 and 4% from 2011. Gap to national is 9% and to Statistical Neighbours is 7%.

Group data had still not been received for Key Stage 4.

Members were informed that some significant improvements had been shown, but the gaps to national and Statistical Neighbour averages remained too wide. Some vulnerable groups had made good gains, notably boys, but others remained too far below the national average. Peterborough had high numbers of pupils who had English not as their first language compared to statistical neighbours.

Members were advised of action that was being taken to address weaknesses:

- Issued Formal “Standards Performance and Safety” Warning Notices. Action plans had been received from the Governing Bodies of these schools - LA reserved the right to take further action if appropriate at any time and this may include formal. ‘No excuses’ culture.
- Collated expected results for schools in 2013 (targets) and these would be monitored and any challenge may lead to further intervention;
- Targeted work with school leaders and teachers in schools which were causing concern, tailored to the needs and weaknesses of the school;
- LA reviews of whole schools or departments being undertaken;
- Reviewing where a ‘sponsored’ academy might provide the necessary stimulus to a school to improve standards especially where performance was below national expectations for a significant period of time, including recommending to governing bodies that this was an expected course of action where the LA deem this to be appropriate
- Setting clear expectations of Heads / Governors – data, floor standards, Ofsted.
- Reviewing and finalising a number of options around strategies to support learning across the city for pupils who have English as an additional language;
- Focussed work around SEN through the ‘Achievement for All Programme’ which 30 schools had signed up for and more generally on strategies to raise standards;
- Targeting schools that were graded by Ofsted as requiring improvement or satisfactory to become good. This had included additional training and support;
- Development of schools partnership to enhance CPD offer (Peterborough Learning Partnership) and development of school to school partnership for school improvement.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented that whilst there were areas of positivity in the results there were also areas of disappointment where progress had not been made. *The Assistant Director for Education and Resources acknowledged that there was still a lot of work to do and would come back to the Committee in April to present the new Education Strategy which would hopefully address their concerns. Members were reminded that in 2007 there were only 35% of schools in Peterborough judged by Ofsted as good or better and now 63% of schools in Peterborough had been judged good or better.*
- Can you explain why there was a difference in progress and results at Key Stage 2 in Maths relative to English? *Members were advised that it may be due to the fact that the technical vocabulary in mathematics was becoming more technical. This had not been the case over the past few years and children for whom English was a new language who had before been successful at mathematics were now finding it more difficult due to the more technical nature of the test.*
- What work was being done to support parents with English Language? *Members were advised that a pilot had been run last year to provide English language lessons for parents for whom English was a foreign language through ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). This had been very successful and would be repeated again this year.*

Seventeen schools had signed up for the course. The LA was also growing their own workforce of trainers through the provision of TESOL courses.

- *Members were concerned that the progress for 5 GCSE's including Maths and English had not improved. Were secondary schools doing enough in lessons to improve this? Members were advised that some secondary schools had improved considerably but secondary teachers had not been as rigorous as primary teachers in establishing a starting point and tracking and monitoring students in progress of attainment. Recent engagement between the LA and Secondary Heads had been good and there was now a real drive to push standards up. Schools not performing were being challenged.*
- *Was there any other data available showing grade boundaries that were not just A* to C and how did Peterborough compare against national indicators. Members were informed that other grade boundaries were available. As an example Peterborough performed very well in A* to G not including English and Maths compared to national indicators.*

AGREED ACTION

The Committee noted the report and agreed to support the Assistant Director for Education and Resources in challenging and intervening in schools/settings and core subject departments where performance was inadequate / below floor standards.

9. Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Notice of Intention to Take Key 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 Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions

10. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 22 April 2013

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.05pm

CHAIRMAN

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