

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON MONDAY 5 JANUARY 2015**

Present:	Councillors S Day (Chairman), B Rush, Nawaz, B Saltmarsh, J Shearman, R Ferris,	
Also present	Stewart Francis Pat Carrington Tanya Meadows	Education Co-optee Principal / Head of Service, City College Peterborough Vice Principal – 14-18 & Employer Engagement, City College Peterborough
Officers in Attendance:	Sue Westcott Johnathan Lewis Lou Williams	Executive Director for Children’s Services Assistant Director for Education, Resources and Corporate Property Assistant Director, Commissioning

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jamil and Councillor Fower. Councillor Ferris attended as substitute for Councillor Jamil. Apologies for absence were also received from Education Co-opted Member Miranda Robinson and Independent Co-opted Member Alistair Kingsley.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

3. Minutes of meetings held on 13 October and 10 November 2014.

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 October and 10 November 2014 were both 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.

Chairman’s Announcements

The Chairman advised the Committee that the officer who was due to attend to present item 6, Childrens Social Care Complaints Supplementary Report was unable to attend due to illness. It was therefore agreed that the report be deferred to the 9 March 2015 meeting.

5. City College Peterborough

The report was introduced by the Principal / Head of Service of the City College Peterborough and provided the Committee with an update on the Peterborough City Council's Adult and Community Learning Provision in terms of the role that City College Peterborough (CCP) has to play in delivering improved educational and other outcomes for the city and also to look at

the College's results, performance, course offers and changes since the last report to the Committee in January 2014. Key areas highlighted were:

- Types of Courses Offered
- Results and Performance
- Changes since the last report to the committee
- Role the College has to play in delivering improved educational and other outcomes for the city.
- Apprenticeships at City College Peterborough

The Chair congratulated the Principal on the progress that had been made in the past year.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members sought clarification regarding apprentices being able to earn while they learn and wanted to know if it was the college or the employer who paid the apprentices. *Members were advised that to study for an apprenticeship the person would have to be in employment. The training would take place at the employer's premises and were paid by the employer.*
- What sort of companies employed apprentices? *Members were informed that there were a variety of companies which included child care providers, IT companies, business administration companies, health and social care providers, hairdressers, motor mechanics, digital and social media companies. This would include companies such as Colorplast, Western Union, NetSupport and Little Miracles.*
- Members congratulated the Principal on being one of just five colleges in the country to be featured in the 2013/2014 Parliamentary Review of Higher and Further Education and had been held up as a shining example of best practice.
- Member's referred to page 23 of the report which stated "*The communities in which the College often works are those that have low skills and low aspirations, often in areas of high deprivation*". Members wanted to know how this linked into the Councils strategy for eliminating poverty. *Members were informed that work with the local communities was done in two ways. An annual prospectus was sent out to charities and they could then apply for funding from the college so they can deliver to those furthest away from education. The college also engages with community groups to work on local projects so that the college can assess what the funding could be used for. The management team also sits on a number of strategic groups across the city like the Children and Families Commissioning Board and Safer Peterborough Partnership which helps them to understand what work needs to be undertaken and where the funding should go.*
- Do you come together with other partners and the council on a regular basis to ensure there is a holistic approach to tackling the issue of poverty? *The Principal advised Members that in terms of the educational and skills development she had recently set up on behalf of the council a Skills Strategy Board. The Board looked at how as a city they could support the skills agenda to improve social and economic wellbeing. The Board was made up of senior people from organisations within the Local Authority, Health, Voluntary Sector, DWP, the third sector, other providers and the Chamber of Commerce.*
- Members were concerned that the Department of Education charging policy for ESOL courses would deter people from taking the course. *Members were advised that funding for Adult Education regardless of which course it was were partly government funded and partly fee based. There were also concessions for those who were eligible. There was a waiting list for ESOL courses due to the shortage of ESOL teachers. This was being addressed in that courses were now being offered at the college to train people to deliver ESOL courses. Fees had not been an issue and numbers attending ESOL courses had not dropped.*
- Members commented that people attending a course at the college which started at 9.30am often were unable to park on college premises and therefore incurred parking charges on top of the course fees. *The Principal responded that most city centre locations*

did not have available parking on site and the fact that the college did have a limited number of free parking spaces was a bonus. The car parking situation was being monitored. Some courses had been moved to the John Mansfield Centre as there were more free parking facilities on site.

- *How do you measure outcomes against the list of agreed objectives on page 24 of the report? How do you know that you have achieved the aspirational objectives? Members were informed that the college was measured in a variety of ways. Core exam results were a straight forward measure. Outcome measures had been introduced for the aspirational objectives. At the end of a course feedback was received from students in several ways to ascertain what had changed in the student's life as a result of the course. Recognising and recording progress and achievement was done by recording through learning plans throughout the course. Core objectives would be set by the student at the beginning of the course and progress against these would be monitored and scored as to whether they had been achieved at the end of the course. Ofsted would look at these outcomes. The Department of Innovation and Skills want to introduce formal outcome measures by looking at different outcomes e.g. did the student get a job because they attended a particular course or did someone's earnings increase as a result of attending a course. This will be measured through the tax and national insurance database going forward.*

The Chair thanked the Principal for attending and providing an informative and interesting report. The Chair also requested that a visit be arranged to the College for the Committee when the extension had been completed.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and the role the City College has to play in delivering improved educational outcomes for the city and requested that a further report be brought back in one year.

The Committee also requested that future reports should include the following information:

1. A list of the formal outcome measures being introduced by the Department of Innovation and Skills and progress made against these.
2. Examples of feedback from students where they had progressed well on their course and had a positive outcome with students in attendance to talk to the Committee about their experience.

6. Review of Placement Strategy for Children Looked After and the Implementation of the Fostering Action Plan

The Assistant Director, Commissioning introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update in relation to Children in Care placements and progress relating to the Fostering Action Plan. It also provided information on the progress made in bringing the mix of placements for children in care in Peterborough closer and in line with national averages through the recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers. It also detailed actions that were being taken to help to ensure that the council only look after the right children, at the right time in their lives, and for the shortest possible period, in line with best practice.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members referred to page 37, paragraph 4.16, which stated that "*having two few children and young people in the care system may be an indication that children and young people were not being adequately safeguarded*". This related to the chart showing Rate of Children Looked After per 10,000. Members asked how this could be measured. *The Assistant Director responded that the rate of children in care in Peterborough during 2010/11 was significantly lower than statistical neighbours and was when the LA's*

performance was seen to be not good. There was no precise science to measure this as it was about making sure children came into care at the right time.

- *Members referred to page 48, paragraph 8.2 stating “A Cabinet report outlining proposals for a contributions policy for children looked after will be produced for consultation in the coming months”. Members sought clarification on the meaning of this statement. Members were informed that under the 1989 Childrens Act there is a power for councils to consider whether they should seek to levy contributions towards the cost of looked after children. It was a means tested contribution and would not apply in situations where people claimed benefits. People not claiming benefits could be asked to make a contribution towards people looking after their children. By putting this in place it would give a clear message that although the authority look after their children parents still had a responsibility towards their children and should therefore contribute towards the cost of looking after them.*
- *Members referred to page 46, paragraph 4.55 which stated “We are therefore committed to working with the community and voluntary sector to identify how we can better support children and families who are newly arrived in the UK”. Members sought clarification on how this would be achieved. Members were informed that as part of the Fostering Recruitment Strategy, first language information had now been developed for the Eastern European countries. Areas of the city which had a large population from those countries were being targeted for recruitment for foster carers. The Executive Director for Childrens Services advised Members that links had been made with various Embassy’s including the Latvian, Lithuanian and Romanian Embassy’s to establish links to ensure that children from those countries have every possible opportunity to remain with their birth families.*
- *Members sought clarification on the proposed new approach of rewarding foster carers through a payments by results model. Members were advised that a number of different ways were being looked at to increase in house foster carers. It had become evident that there were particular types of children who were more likely to be placed with independent foster agency carers. Work was being done to look at how in house foster carers could be incentivised to take on more challenging children and what support would be needed to encourage them to do this.*
- *Are foster carers within the city council better supported than agency foster carers? Members were advised that city council foster carers were guaranteed to have local children placed with them whereas agency carers might get children from anywhere. In house foster carers would also receive excellent local support.*
- *Was the local authority looking at providing 100% in house foster carers? Members were informed that the priority was to provide good quality foster care for children whether that be in house or through an agency. Private sector foster care agencies cost about £750 to £800 per week of which the foster carer would get less than half of that and an in house foster carer would receive about £300 to £350 a week. The aim therefore was to provide more in house foster care. Fostering agencies have an aggressive recruitment programme and Peterborough had been focussing over the last 18 months on a strong marketing campaign which was now paying off.*
- *How many foster carers does Peterborough City Council have? Members were advised that there were around 100 to 155 active carers.*
- *Members commented that many of the council services had been outsourced. Had the outsourcing model with the private sector been considered? The Assistant Director responded that all models were being considered and some private sector agencies had contacted the authority to discuss this but they had not been able to match the same unit cost as the council.*
- *Members were concerned at the ambitious challenge of recruiting 50 more foster carers and wanted to know if it could be achieved and if 50 would be a sufficient number. Members were informed that it was achievable. Work was being done to look at ways of preventing the number of children coming in to care increasing and therefore 50 more should be sufficient.*

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for an informative and interesting report.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested that a further report come back to the Committee in January 2016 to provide an update on continuing efforts to recruit in house foster carers and the continuing implementation of the Placement Strategy. The report to also include work being done with young people aged 10 to 15 years old.

7. Directors Report for Social Care Practice and Performance

The Executive Director of Children's Services introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the progress of performance and practice in Children's Social Care. The following highlights as of October 2014 were covered:

- Continued increase in early intervention assessments (CAFs) (38.1%) - higher than target
- Slightly below target for number of referrals (4.2% below target). Still higher than the English result but not our statistical neighbour rate (576.4 per 10,000 as opposed to 634.9 stat neighbour)
- Conversion rate from contact to referral 20% lower than same time two years ago (no comparable data kept)
- Majority of referrals had a single assessment completed (248 from 254)
- Re-referral rate lower than statistical neighbours and English authorities indicating referrals being worked thoroughly
- Majority of single assessments in timescale (88.8%)
- Continuing high number of Child Protection enquiries: 76, of which only 52.6% had the outcome of an Initial Child Protection Conference
- High number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (30.4% above target)
- Drop in Child Protection Reviews in timescale (Serco)
- Continued increase in Looked After Children (383)

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members noted and were concerned at the high number of child protection conference's which was 51.1% above target compared to the English national average of 46.2%. Was there an action plan in place to address this? *Members were advised that there was an action plan in place and this could be provided.*
- Members referred to the update on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and that it seemed to have had some teething problems with other agencies. Had these issues now been resolved? *Members were informed that MASH was the second phase of the first response team. There had been delays in the development of MASH. The Health post was now out for advertisement and the part time post from women's aide would be in place very soon and this would mean a multi-disciplinary team at the front door.*
- Members referred to staffing levels. Had the three permanent Team Managers been recruited? *Members were informed that the Team Managers had been recruited and two would be in post over the next few weeks and the third was undergoing reference checking. Permanent Heads of Service were also now in place for Quality Assurance, Looked after Children and for Adoption and Fostering.*
- Members noted in the report that an exercise was underway to improve the way in which Child in Need cases were brought to closure and that it was estimated that in excess of 80 cases would close due to the review by the end of December 2014. Had this happened? *Members were informed that some had been closed but not 80. It was an ongoing challenge and was being closely monitored.*
- Had the new Assistant Director been recruited? *Members were advised that the post had been filled and she would be starting at the beginning of March 2015.*

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report.

8. 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.

9. Work Programme 2014/2015

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2014/15 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

The Senior Governance Officer informed the Committee that some Councillors had requested that the Scrutiny in a Day – One Year On event which had been scheduled for 27 February in the afternoon should be moved to an evening event to allow more people to attend. As the event would only run for three hours this would be possible. The Senior Governance Officer sought the committee's views on this.

The Executive Director for Childrens Services informed the Committee that she had recently visited Lincolnshire County Council and they had recently had a very positive Ofsted inspection. One of the areas which Ofsted were impressed with was that they had a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group that looked at how the scrutiny committee measured and assured the quality of social work practice. The Committee requested that the Executive Director bring a report to the March meeting to consider her request to set up a Task and Finish Group.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. To confirm the work programme for 2014/15 and the Senior Governance Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.
2. The Committee agreed that the Scrutiny in a Day – One Year on Event could be held in the evening.
3. The Executive Director to bring a report to the March meeting providing a detailed proposal to set up a Task and Finish Group to look in to how the scrutiny committee could measure and provide assurance of the quality of social work practice.
4. The Childrens Social Care Complaints Supplementary Report to be added to the March agenda.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.23pm

CHAIRMAN