

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON 13 JUNE 2011**

Present: Councillors S Day (Chairman), Benton, Elsey, Kreling, JR Fox and E Murphy

Also present Alistair Kingsley Parent Governor Representative
Cllr John Fox Representing the Leader of the Peterborough
Independent Forum
Councillor Scott Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Lynn Chesterton Service Manager, Safeguarding Team
Zain Awan Peterborough Youth Council

Officers in Attendance: John Richards Executive Director, Children's Services
Andrew Brunt Assistant Director, Family and Communities
Paulina Ford Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny
Ruth Griffiths Lawyer

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillors Harper, Sanders, Saltmarsh and Shearman and Brian Opie, Parent Governor Representative. Councillor Elsey was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Harper, Councillor Kreling was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Sanders, Councillor John Fox was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Saltmarsh and Councillor Murphy was in attendance for Councillor Shearman.

2. Declarations

Declarations of interest were received from Councillor Murphy who declared that he was an elected Governor of Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Foundation Trust and was also a resident who lived next to Vawser Lodge. This declaration was with regard to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions item 10 on the agenda where there was mention of Vawser Lodge.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2011

The minutes of the meetings held on 21 March 2011 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. Introduction to Children's Services

The Executive Director of Children's Services introduced the report and then presented a video to the Committee about the Needs of the City. The video put into context the needs of children and young people across the City. Key points of the video were:

- The population of Peterborough had grown by around 40,000 people in the last 30 years.

- The current population was estimated at 171,200 people of whom 44,300 were aged 0 to 19.
- England was divided in to 32,482 super output areas and each area was ranked according to their index of child deprivation score where 1 was the most deprived. One part of Dogsthorpe was in the 10% most deprived areas of the country and was ranked 297. However one part of Orton Waterville was in the 10% most affluent areas of the country and was ranked 31,884.
- Child poverty was determined by families:
 - suffering high levels of worklessness
 - living in deprived neighbourhoods
 - living in Cities where local economies lacked quality of life
 - living in Cities with a legacy of low attainment and low skills
- 24% of Peterborough Children were living in poverty, this equated to around 8000 children.
- 94% of pupils living in the City Centre were from ethnic minority background yet in Barnack it was 5.3%.
- 27% of pupils had English as their second language compared to 16% in 2005. This meant that over 8000 children and young people in our schools did not have English as their main language. There were 99 different languages spoken in Peterborough schools.
- On average 169 young women become teenage mothers every year.
- Currently there were 300 children in care.
- Seven years ago 2% of the Peterborough school population were Eastern European, it was now 9%.
- 1.2% of children in Peterborough had multiple or complex disabilities which equated to approximately 514 children.
- There were around 2400 young carers aged 5 to 16.
- The average in-house foster placement cost £240 per week. On average there were 138 foster carers at any one time totalling £33,120 per week. In comparison an agency placement cost £767 per week. Due to the high level of needs the top five residential placements cost £1,205,568 per year.
- During 2009/10 - 5,130 15 to 24 year olds were screened for Chlamydia compared to 3,500 in 2008/09.
- 66% of young people receiving substance misuse support had alcohol as their primary substance.
- Young people surveyed felt that:
 - 64% of girls aged 15 wanted to lose weight compared to 35% of 15 year old boys
 - 18% of secondary school pupils surveyed, believed cannabis was safe when used correctly
 - 35% knew someone personally who took some form of drugs
 - 23% said they were uncomfortable talking to their doctor
 - The top three things young people worried about was school work and exams, the way they looked and career decisions
- Despite the challenges Peterborough had many successes:
 - In 2010 87% of children in Peterborough had accessed dental services in the last two years compared to 70% nationally
 - 43% of babies aged 6-8 weeks were still being breastfed which was amongst the highest within the statistical neighbour group
 - In 2010 1165 children achieved the expected level in Early Years Foundation Stage tests compared to 907 in 2009 this showed significant improvement between 2008 and 2010
 - Reception age obesity reduced to 9.65% in 2009 from 12.6% in 2008, the equivalent of 75 children.

- In 2010 GCSE results rose significantly for the second year running. 1694 young people achieved 5 or more A*-C grades of which 1067 had English and Maths included
- Ofsted had rated 280 of the services as being Good or better, 28 had been rated as Outstanding
- Caverstede Early Years Centre won an award at the 2010 Nursery World Awards

The Executive Director for Children's Services informed the Committee about the range of services available within Children's Services. This covered Early Years, Schools in the City, Young Peoples Service, Youth Offending Services, Children's Social Care, relationships with partners and resources. Every service was wrapped around children and families in order to resolve their needs and also around schools and settings. The Journey to Excellence approach had changed to the Making Every Day Count approach to achieve the best outcomes for all children. The Executive Director for Children's Services informed the Committee that he and his department were passionate about getting it right for all children and welcomed being scrutinised. By April 2012 it was the intention that all interventions would be evidence based in practice and work was being done with a national organisation to help provide interventions that worked. There would be a focus on pathways for children so that every provider would know exactly what was expected of them and targeting services in community neighbourhoods and early intervention. The Executive Director of Children's services informed the Committee that his role was both challenging and rewarding. Children's Services were going through a great deal of change and he looked to Members and his staff for support in achieving successful outcomes for all children and young people across the City.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- *With the high influx of children into the City would there be enough school places. Places were available in some Primary Schools even though some others had waiting lists. An idea had been put forward to federate schools and link schools that had places and those that had waiting lists. Children and young people who had applied for places in the first round for this coming September had all been placed. Last year between July and September there were 500 additional requests for admission 300 of which came from people outside of the City mainly from Eastern Europe. A paper had been produced on the pressures in the school system and how it was being tackled and could be provided to members electronically.*
- *What was the forward thinking in closing various schools like John Mansfield knowing that there would be an influx of people from Eastern Europe? The Executive Director of Children's Services informed Members that he was unable to answer this as he had not been employed by the Council at the time the decision was made. His understanding was the initial planning was that young couples would move to the new townships into the and eventually start families the population of children would then gradually increase. However the private rental market had increased and families with young children had been moving into the area. The increase in population had not just been due to an influx of people from Eastern Europe. To take account of the future shortage of school places in the City Centre the old Hereward School had been reopened as the City Academy. There had also been an increase in places at schools like Stanground, Ormston Bushfield and Orton Longueville. Everything possible was being done to plan for the future.*
- *Was there anything that could be done to encourage more people to adopt? Some foster carers would be willing to adopt but had found that it would not be financially viable and also had heard that the biological parents would still have access rights over the children. Was there anything that could be done to address these issues? In terms of adoption the personal and financial circumstances of the prospective adoptive parents were looked at and the particular nature of the children was taken into consideration. Sometimes post adoption allowances were applied which recognised loss of income for fostering and that it was a permanent solution for the children and young people. In terms of contact every*

individual case was looked at by the Adoption Panel and Court to decide what type of contact should be made by the child and the natural parents.

- Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Children's Services addressed the Committee informing them that there was no compromise by the Council for the children that needed protection and safeguarding.
- The paperwork for people wishing to become foster parents was immense could this be reduced. *This could not be reduced. People who wished to become Foster Parents had to work through a portfolio of tasks.*
- How many of the children in care were in different types of placements? *The co-hort of children in care were made up of different types of placements – internal foster care placements, external foster care placements, kinship placements with families and friends, residential care and 3% to 4% who were placed at home prior to rehabilitation.*
- Children's Centres were excellent. How can we ensure that families who are on the lower income scale and really need the facilities can get access to them? *The initial idea behind Children's Centres was to provide a universal offer. The new government thinking was that the Children's Centres should be used much more for targeted families. Under the new targeted operating model there would be advice on what Children's Centres could and could not be used for.*
- Over 90% of young people living within the Central Ward were from a minority ethnic background. Do you feel that there is an effective and efficient service for them? *Members were informed that whilst a lot was being done for this group there was always more that could be done. The Executive Director of Children's Services had recently met with youth workers from the Central Ward who engaged with many young people, the primary schools provided extended services and the Gladstone Children's Centre also provided many services within that area.*
- With the high influx of the Eastern European people into this community what was being done for young people from this community. *Many of the families were not know and the main support was currently coming through the Health Service. The Executive Director of Children's Services felt that it would be a good idea to bring back to the Committee at a future date a report on how Children's Services were responding to those children with diverse needs.*
- Can you give an update on the progress of Children's Social Care? *By the end of April all targets set by government had been met. However the Notice to Improve would remain until there had been another safe guarding inspection at which time if there were no further issues it would be removed. The actual issues at the time of being put into Notice to Improve were regarding the referral and assessment part of the service and to do with how initial assessments and core assessments were dealt with. Whilst it was still a challenge there was a continued drive to strive for consistency of approach with regard to timeliness and quality.*
- Councillor Scott advised that it had been a difficult time for the department over the past year however the improvements that had been made by the Social Care team had meant that there had been huge progress and this needed to be sustained.

The Chair thanked the Executive Director of Children's Services for a comprehensive and informative presentation.

ACTION AGREED

- That a report be presented to the Committee at a future meeting on how Children's Services were responding to those children with diverse needs.

6. Children's (Social Care) Services Statutory Complaints Process (Children act 1989) Annual Report 2010/11

The report was an annual report that informed the Committee about the statutory complaints process and referred to complaints presented by or on behalf of 'children in need' or 'looked after' children meaning those children who were in receipt of social care services.

Understanding the nature of complaints was critical in understanding the quality of the service. It formed part of the continuous improvement framework for social care. The process of complaints in terms of timeliness and response and how that was adhered to was important for a number of reasons. An early response meant you got a more satisfied customer and greater potential of getting the right service in response to the need and it also helped to sort out any deficiencies within that service. In July of last year it was decided that complaints would be dealt with corporately and a simple guide was also produced for Managers on how complaints should be dealt with.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- In the report there were 31 complaints about staff attitude and conduct, what did this mean. *Staff attitude could be anything from someone who did not reply to a telephone call, or did not turn up when they were expected or if someone had not liked what was said to them.*
- When the complaints process moved across to the corporate team how much of the change potentially in the statistics related to being directed to the new team. Was there a correlation between complaints about staff attitudes and lack of specific skills from staff now receiving these complaints? *The complaints were being recorded much more accurately and this had resulted in an increase. It was not clear if this was because people were less happy with the service or the fact that the response was more robust. It had been recognised that staff had not been sufficiently trained in dealing with complaints and last December the Local Government Ombudsman was brought in to train all team managers. A quick guide was produced to support this training.*
- When complaints are frozen due to legal proceedings how long can these take to resolve. *This was not a common occurrence and often the issues of the complaint were dealt with during the court proceedings.*
- What percentage of staff reductions did you have in the last financial year and would this have attributed to an increase in complaints. *The complaints that were covered in the report related to an area where there had been an investment in staff not a reduction.*
- Were most of the complaints simply about responding in time? *The complaints process was a statutory process and one issue was about the impact of how quickly complaints were responded to therefore customer needs were being enforced in staff.*
- In the report six children had complained about accessibility. Was this due to excess of beaurocracy involved in the complaints procedure or because they were not actually aware that they could challenge the service that they were receiving. *Young people and children were made aware of how to make a complaint and help and support was given to them to enable them to complain should they wish to. Young people and children were continually asked for feed back on how services could be improved.*

ACTIONS AGREED

To bring back to the Committee a further update report on the statistics and categories of complaints in six months time.

7. Review of 2010/2011 and Work Programme for 2011/2012

The report provided information on the work undertaken by the Committee during 2010/2011 and recommendations made. The Committee were asked to identify items for monitoring during 2011/2012 and any new items for the work programme.

Items identified for inclusion into the work programme were:

- Child Poverty Strategy
- Educational Attainment of Minority Groups and New Arrivals
- Provision of School Places for early years foundation and secondary school

The Chair suggested that Education Attainment could be the theme for the Committee for the coming year.

8. Forward Plan of key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan, 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 Forward Plan and agreed that there were no items to bring to the Committee.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The Senior Governance Officer advised the Committee that she had identified that there was a clash of meetings on the date of the next scheduled meeting which was 11 July 2011. The committee agree that the meeting should be rearranged to a more suitable date. The Committee agreed to this change and asked the Senior Governance Officer to arrange this and inform the Committee as soon as possible.

The meeting began at 7.00 and ended at 8.55pm.

CHAIRMAN