

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON 26 JULY 2011**

Present: Councillors S Day (Chairman), Benton, Saltmarsh, Simons, and J Shearman

Also present Alistair Kingsley Parent Governor Representative
Brian Opie Parent Governor Representative
Luke Pagliaro Peterborough Youth Council
Shamsa Nagji Peterborough Youth Council

Officers in Attendance: John Richards Executive Director, Children's Services
Leonie McCarthy Social Inclusion Manager
Paulina Ford Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny
Elaine Lewis Lawyer

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillor Harper. Councillor Simons was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Harper.

2. Declarations

A declaration of interest was received from Councillor Shearman in relation to item 5, Single Equality Scheme Consultation who declared that he did use hearing aids.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2011

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 June 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. Single Equality Scheme Consultation

The report informed the Committee on how the council would meet its responsibilities in delivering equality and diversity through its service planning and delivery. The Single Equality Scheme underpinned the council's strategic plans and demonstrated how it would meet the legal responsibilities. The scheme brought together the equality schemes the council previously had in place into to one document.

The scheme outlined:

- The council's vision and commitments to promoting equality and diversity and challenging discrimination in service delivery and employment functions;
- Guidance to staff and councillors about the promotion of equal opportunities and opposing discrimination, both as an employer and a service provider; and how it would tell the community and partners about its approach to equalities;
- Key actions for 2011 to 2014;
- Equality impact assessment procedures;

- Statutory duties;
- Related employment policies and procedures; and
- The profile of Peterborough's population and workforce.

Governance of the Scheme would be through:

- Elected Members in their role
- Cabinet – approval of equality policies
- HR
- Corporate Management Team
- Heads of Service
- Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee
- Peterborough Diversity Forum

The final draft of the Single Equality Scheme would be presented to Cabinet in September incorporating any comments from the Committee.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- This is a very high level strategic document, will there be detailed dates and actions that can be scrutinised to enable this committee to monitor the scheme going forward. *Members were informed that although it was a strategic document there would need to be a detailed action plan to achieve the strategic outcomes.*
- How much feedback have you had to the consultation? *At the point of checking there had been six responses.*
- A member of the Pensioners Association was in attendance in the audience and was asked by the Committee if they had been aware of the consultation on the Single Equality Scheme. They responded that the Pensioners Association had been aware of the Single Equality Scheme and consultation.
- How are you going to monitor private companies? *Any private organisations providing services would be asked to provide evidence on how they would meet the equality duties. An impact equality assessment would also be undertaken.*
- What was the procedure for people highlighting issues with regard to the provision of services for people with disabilities without them having to make a complaint? Councillor Shearman gave an example of the provision of hearing loops for people with a hearing disability. *There were several issues across the city and hotspots where it had not been safe for disabled people. Five groups would be formed to cover every area for disabled people across the city. The groups would highlight areas that needed to be addressed and actively seek input from residents and groups across the city.*
- Will there be a single officer within the Authority who would have a complete overview of the scheme or would it be dependant on Heads of Service to make sure the scheme was implemented. *The Council lead for the Single Equality Scheme was Denise Radley. Leonie McCarthy would lead on the Scheme in the neighbourhoods.*
- Members noted that the document had highlighted that some parts of the Dogsthorpe Ward were within the 3% most deprived Super Output Areas in England. Members requested that this be changed to say 'some parts of the City' and delete the reference to Dogsthorpe as no other wards had been named.
- The Committee requested details on the job description of the Social Inclusion Manager to enable them to have a better understanding of the role.
- How do you prevent indirect discrimination? *The Committee were advised that the best way to find out how to prevent indirect discrimination was to ask the people.*
- Representatives of the Youth Council informed the Social Inclusion Manager that the Youth Council would want to be involved in the Single Equality Scheme. They also advised of a recent survey conducted on services and how successful they were to different groups, the results of which could be provided.

The Committee felt that a return of six responses to the consultation was very low and that a lot more work would be required to gain a true reflection of the needs and issues of people across the city.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee requested that:

- A more detailed action plan with milestones, activities and evidence should be produced to support the implementation and on going delivery of the Single Equality Scheme. The action plan to be brought back to the Committee for monitoring at its meeting in November.
- There should be an Equalities representative in each department across the Council.
- The reference to the Dogsthorpe Ward being within the 3% most deprived Super Output Areas in England be removed and instead say 'some parts of the city'.
- The Social Inclusion Manager to provide the Committee with details of her job description and tasks within that role.

6. Single Delivery Plan

The Executive Director of Children's Services introduced the report. There were two critical issues within the Single Delivery Plan that fell within the remit of the Committee:

1. Programme 2: Supporting the most vulnerable families and tackling the causes of poverty
2. Programme 3: Safeguarding adults and children

In addition project 1 (Improving skills and raising standards in schools) of programme 1: Creating jobs through growth and improved skills and education, also applied.

A DVD produced by young people, the Young Peoples Service and the Commissioning team in Children's Services was shown to the Committee. The DVD explained what poverty was like in Peterborough and what actions would need to be taken to address this. It demonstrated a collaborative approach in tackling poverty in Peterborough. The Committee were informed that poverty was more likely if people lived in either vulnerable groups, had vulnerable lifestyles, had vulnerable moments or had vulnerable settings. Indicators around those areas would be used to monitor the reduction in poverty across the city. The Single Delivery Plan ensured that all Partners were signed up to working collaboratively through a multi dimensional approach in reducing poverty.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- 41.9% of children in poverty are in the Central Ward. Are there any action plans in place to address this? *There were no specific actions in place for Central Ward but work was being done with the Neighbourhoods Team to look at how families in the Central and North wards could be targeted to make a real difference.*
- How easy is it to achieve effective indicators for the outcomes to provide ongoing reporting? How can you collate and report on these. *Vulnerable settings, vulnerable lifestyles and vulnerable groups have measurable outcomes but vulnerable moments would be difficult to measure. The outcomes could be benchmarked now and then a report could be provided in six months to see the results.*
- Has the removal of ring fencing had an adverse effect on the Early Year's provision? *There had been a 25% cut in grant to Early Years and Surestart by Government last year. This had not been passed onto Children's Centres and had been absorbed within the budget but the budget to Children's Centres had been reduced this financial year. There were no plans to close any of the fifteen Children's Centres. With the reduced budget that had been available there had been a renegotiation with the providers of the Children's*

Centres and the costs associated had been reduced whilst still being able to provide a good quality services as evidenced by Ofsted. The latest data for Early Years Foundation Stage which was a measure of how ready children were for learning and teaching had shown an increase of 5% in Peterborough. There had also been a narrowing of the gap between the lowest 20% percent of children in Peterborough and the rest of the population. Children in reception showing increased stability for learning in literacy and numeracy were likely to perform and achieve in Key Stage 1 this then led to improvements in Key Stage 2.

- Members commented that stable leadership in an Authority was critical to the success of improving results. *John Richards responded that he had been with the Authority for nearly three years and when he had joined the Authority he came with a long term strategy for improvement the results of which were now starting to show.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee requested that:

The Executive Director for Children's Services provide the Committee with an action plan to measure progress in reducing poverty across the City. The report to include benchmark data and measurable indicators for the outcomes of the four vulnerable areas identified which lead to poverty. The report to be presented to the Committee in six months time.

7. Safeguarding Notice to Improve Update

The report informed the Committee on the performance of Children's Services in respect of the work to deliver against the DfE Notice to Improve for Safeguarding Services. The Executive Director went through the Key Metrics Report which had been presented to the Safeguarding and Children in Care Project Management Board highlighting key points. The data provided was real time data and changed on a month by month basis.

- The three key targets for December (completing 70% of Initial Assessments within timescale; completing 75% of Core Assessments within timescale; and, ensuring no social worker within Referral and Assessment had more than 30 cases allocated to them) had all been met.
- Monthly performance in delivering Initial and Core Assessments within timescale remained strong and on course to meet the key Notice to Improve targets for end March 2011.
- Work to ensure a maximum caseload of 25 for Referral and Assessment social workers remained challenging. Work to ensure effective case transfer; close down of cases and recruitment to fill remaining vacancies should ensure a continued reduction of case loads towards targets.
- Whilst the overall social worker vacancy rate stood at 19%, including agency staff, this figure was only 9%, just above the March 2011 target. However, a number of permanent positions had been filled and, once the new staff take up their positions, this figure would drop to 2%. Significant recruitment and retention activity was underway to ensure vacancy rates continued to reduce.
- Significant progress was being made in the procurement of a new Integrated Case Management System. This was of key importance in supporting staff to improve the recording and efficiency of their work. It was expected that roll-out of the new system would start in June/July 2011.
- New approaches to evaluating the impact of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) were being rolled out. A key focus was now on ensuring that the evaluative processes were fully embedded into the work of professionals who used the CAF.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Is the rise in referrals because you are now looking more closely at this area? *A change in the system may have influenced this rise but this was being looked at very closely to understand why this had happened.*
- The target for caseload per social worker is 25 but it appears that some have more and some have less, why is this. *The data shows a point in time. Some of the caseloads were higher because some cases at that point in time would be waiting to be signed off by the manager other cases would have just been assigned and waiting to be looked at. For those who appear to have less this may be because they are new staff or work part time. There were constant referrals and the data showed the referrals that were being dealt with on that day.*
- How skilled are the people who work on the special Children's Social Care switchboard in the call centre. *People who worked in this part of the call centre were highly trained and had been transferred from the referral and assessment team.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee requested that:

The Executive Director for Children's Services provides the Committee with a further update report at the next meeting of the Committee.

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. Work Programme

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2010/11 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme for 2010/11 and the Scrutiny Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.

10. Date of the Next Meeting

12 September 2011

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.12pm

CHAIRMAN

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