



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON MONDAY 15 JUNE 2015**

Present: Councillors B Saltmarsh (Chair), G Nawaz, B Rush, A Coles, J Shearman, J Yonga, D Fower

Also present	Alistair Kingsley	Independent Co-optee
	Stewart Francis	Parent Governor Representative
	Andrew Brown	Education Co-optee

Officers in Attendance:	Wendi Ogle-Welbourn	Corporate Director, People and Communities
	Jonathan Lewis	Service Director for Education, People Resources and Corporate Property
	Lou Williams	Service Director, Childrens Services and Safeguarding
	Kim Sawyer	Director of Governance
	Paulina Ford	Senior Democratic Services Officer
	Karen Dunleavy	Democratic Services Officer

1. Election of Chair

The Director of Governance who was in attendance for this item only advised the Committee that as agreed at Full Council on 20 May 2015, the appointment of Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committees and Commissions fell to the individual Committee or Commission to make these appointments.

The Director of Governance requested nominations from the Committee for the position of Chair of the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Shearman nominated Councillor Saltmarsh and Councillor Coles seconded the nomination.

As there were no other nominations Councillor Saltmarsh was therefore elected by the Committee as Chair of the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/2016 Municipal year.

2. Election of Vice Chair

The newly elected Chair of the Committee requested nominations from the Committee for the position of Vice Chair of the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Saltmarsh nominated Councillor Fower and Councillor Yonga seconded the nomination.

As there were no other nominations Councillor Fower was therefore, elected Vice Chair of the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/2016 municipal year.

3. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peach and Councillor Nawaz was in attendance as substitute. Apologies for absence were also received from Education Co-opted Member Miranda Robinson and Andrew Brown attended as substitute.

4. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

5. Minutes of meetings held on 9 March 2015

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 March 2015 were agreed as an accurate record.

6. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

7. Appointment of Co-opted Member

The Chair introduced the report which proposed that the Committee consider retaining Alistair Kingsley as a Co-opted Member of the Committee with no voting rights for the municipal year 2015/2016.

The Committee unanimously agreed to the proposal and agreed to review the appointment at the end of the municipal year.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee agreed to retain Alistair Kingsley as a Co-opted Member of the Committee with no voting rights and that this arrangement be reviewed on an annual basis.

8. Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities: Introduction, Overview and Work Programme

The report was introduced by the Corporate Director, People and Communities and provided the committee with an overview of the issues, opportunities, priorities and challenges in connection with the creating opportunities and tackling inequalities theme with the aim to establishing a scrutiny work programme for the year. The Service Director for Childrens Services and Safeguarding and the Service Director for Education, People Resources and Corporate Property were also in attendance and they gave a power point presentation to the committee which is attached at Appendix 1.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members felt it would be useful for a member of the Governors Leadership Group to attend a meeting of the committee to give Members an overview from a Governors perspective.
- Members referred to foster carers who looked after the same children for a long time and whilst this was a good thing it also meant that good foster carers were not available to take on new children. *Members were informed that the Local Authority had a statutory responsibility to care for looked after children until they were 21 or until 24 if in education. If children decide that they wish to leave foster care and become independent they are supported to make an informed decision as once they have left the foster care they do not have an opportunity to go back.*

- Members wanted to know how the radicalisation agenda fitted in with the work around missing children. *Members were advised that this area of work was covered within the Communities team and a lot of work was being done with Mosques on this. The Safeguarding Board would be looking at the work being done around missing children and exactly what 'missing' means and how this information is being captured.*
- Members suggested that one item for consideration for the work programme would be mental health and young people.
- Members were pleased to hear that there was now a permanent Assistant Director in place for Childrens Social Care which would enable staff to feel more confident and provide stability.
- Members noted that actions were being taken to reach out to the Eastern European community and asked officers what these actions were. *Members were informed that specific marketing material in different languages had been produced and the website had been improved with translation features.*
- Members commented that there was a real need to attract social workers to the city and felt that the current website was unclear and very text heavy. There was nothing on the website to advise on how to become a social worker. *Officers acknowledged that there was a need to revamp the website and produce some positive marketing material to attract professional social workers to the city.*
- Members and officers discussed future requirements for monitoring data and the way it would be presented to the Committee. Members requested that bench marking data also be presented in future reports.
- Members noted the successes with fostering and adoption and wanted to know the reason for this success and if officers felt it was sustainable and would continue. *Members were advised that with regard to fostering there had been a huge effort in re-launching the website and materials. Some of the best recruiters had been existing foster carers who had talked to people about their positive experiences as a foster carer. Another reason for success was that housing in Peterborough was cheaper than other areas in the country and this often meant that people had a spare bedroom. There was pressure to ensure the success continued but other avenues were also being considered like working in partnership with fostering agencies. With regard to adoption this had been successful as it was an area which had very little change of personnel which meant it was more stable.*

The Chair thanked officers for an informative presentation and that the suggestions for the work programme would be considered at the first Group Representatives meeting.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and agreed that an item for the work programme would be mental health needs of care leavers.

9. Review of 2014/2015 and Future Work Programme

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which provided the Committee with a review of the work undertaken during 2014/2015, Terms of Reference for the Committee, recommendations made during 2014/2015 and a draft work programme for discussion. The Officer also addressed the Committee on the principles of Good Scrutiny which covered the following:

The principals of good scrutiny:

- Provide a critical friend and challenge the executive policy makers and decision makers.
- Enables the voice and concerns of the public.
- Is carried out by independent minded governors, who lead and own the scrutiny role.

- Drives improvement in public services.

What makes scrutiny work?

- Ownership – Member led and Officer driven.
- Focus – Clear work programme and objectives.
- Research – Getting to know the real issues.
- Innovation – Engaging in different ways.
- Reputation – Being recognised for adding value and making an impact, tackling issues of direct relevance to local people.

The Committee should ensure that all work carried out by them:

- Is focused and relevant to the remit of the Committee
- Makes a positive impact on services.
- Promotes good practice.
- Challenges underperformance.
- Acts as a catalyst for change.
- Deals, where appropriate, with relevant partnership issues.
- Provides strong and clear recommendations to Cabinet or Council to enable positive outcomes.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer informed the Committee of the possibility of alternative Governance Arrangements going forward and how it was important for all scrutiny committees to think about the following:

- How scrutiny could help to influence change within new governance arrangements.
- There was an opportunity for the scrutiny committees to work together to help design the new model of alternative governance by thinking about what the new model would mean in terms of:
 - Number of scrutiny committees
 - Number of meetings
 - Terms of reference
 - Ways of working
 - How they would fit in to the whole process of reporting in to Cabinet/Council
- It was as an opportunity for scrutiny to make an impact and to add real value to the organisation.

The Chair invited the Committee to make suggestions for items for the 2015/2016 work programme. The following suggestions were put forward:

- Mental Health provision and childhood counselling services
- School improvement and the role of the School Improvement Board and accountability
- Child Poverty Strategy
- Impact of health services on Early Help services
- Update on implementation of SEND reforms

The following items were agreed for the July agenda:

- Service Directors report including data
- Update on implementation of SEND reforms
- Ofsted Outcome Report
- Mental Health Services for Care leavers

The work programme for future meetings would be discussed at the first Group Representatives meeting. The Chair requested that any further suggestions should be emailed to the Senior Democratic Services Officer. The officer would email the previous presentation to Members as a prompt.

- Members noted that some of the recommendations made last year in regard to the item 'Improving Education Outcomes Task and Finish Group Final Report' presented on 14 July 2014 did not appear to have made much progress. *Officers responded that there had been some resourcing issues but that the recommendations would continue to be worked on.*
- The Service Director for Education, People Resources and Corporate Property advised the Committee that he had been looking at how scrutiny worked in other authorities with Childrens Services and advised that he would bring a proposal to scrutiny for discussion.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised Members that the Scrutiny in a Day review on the Impact of Welfare Reforms held in January 2014 had been shortlisted for the Centre for Public Scrutiny, Good Scrutiny Awards and had received a highly commended certificate.

ACTION AGREED

1. The Committee noted the report and presentation and agreed the agenda for the next meeting of the Committee in July.
2. The Committee also agreed that the remaining work programme would be discussed at the first Group Representatives meeting of the year.

10. 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.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.00pm

CHAIRMAN