

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING
HELD AT 7PM ON THURSDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2018
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillors D Over (Vice Chairman acting as Chairman), S Bashir, A Dowson, A Ellis, M Farooq, C Harper, D Jones, S Lane, B Rush, N Sandford, J Stokes, Co-opted Members: P Cantley, F Vetesse, Rizwan Rahemtulla and Parish Councillors J Bhatti and S Lucas

Also Present: Councillor Sam Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Lynne Ayres, Cabinet Member for Skills, Education and University
Andy Elvin, Chief Executive of TACT

Officers Present: Lou Williams, Service Director, Children and Safeguarding
Sheelagh Sullivan, Head of SEN and Inclusion Services
Katy Blessett, Head of Statutory Assessment and Monitoring Services
Jonathan Lewis, Service Director Education
Paulina Ford – Senior Democratic Services Officer

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Goodwin, Councillor Saltmarsh, Councillor Casey and Councillor Mahabadi. The following Councillors were in attendance as substitutes: Councillor Stokes for Councillor Goodwin, Councillor Sandford for Councillor Saltmarsh, Councillor Harper for Councillor Casey and Councillor Jones for Councillor Mahabadi. Alistair Kingsley, Independent Co-opted Member also submitted apologies.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

26. MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2018.

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 September 2018 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

27. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

28. UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PERMANENCY SERVICE

The Service Director, Children and Safeguarding accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Chief Executive of TACT introduced the report which provided the

Committee with a summary of the progress of the Permanency Service since implementation in April 2017.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members were informed that children who went through the child protection system were one cohort of children regardless of their individual circumstances. The Permanency Service therefore offered training to foster/adoptive carers and extended family members who may have provided a permanent home for the child or children through special Guardianship Orders. Family Group Conferences facilitated independently of the Council offered support and advice and provided an opportunity to share experiences.
- Members sought clarification with regard to paragraph 2.24 *“In July 2018, Cabinet agreed to make additional funding available to meet additional pressures in the current financial year, and agreed in principle to bringing budgets for external placements back to within the Council.”* Members were informed that the original concept was to pass the total budget for all kinds of placements for children in care over to TACT and then expect savings to arise as TACT were better at providing foster care placements and therefore the money would reduce and savings made. However the placement market for looked after children had changed dramatically. Between 2016 and 2017 nationally there had been an extra 2000 children in the care system. Locally there had also been a substantial increase which meant that children that would have normally been looked after in a local residential placement were now being looked after in more expensive out of area residential placements. The original budget was therefore not sufficient. TACT would continue to recruit foster carers.
- It was noted that the Permanency Service had improved but enquired whether it still required improvement and if it did would the contract be terminated if it was still not judged good at the time of the next inspection. Members were advised that when TACT took over the fostering service it was at the lower end of requiring improvement. At a recent Ofsted inspection in March 2018 the fostering service was looked at even though it was not the main focus and reported that the service was well on its way to being ‘Good’.
- There was an expectation that TACT would bid to provide the combined “Regional Adoption Agency”, there would however be the usual tender process in place.
- A report had been presented to Cabinet in July highlighting the rise in children in care which was causing a budget pressure. It was noted that a small number of children were in residential placements which were in some cases costing up to £200k per child. Cabinet agreed that additional budget would need to be found. The council had also moved to a family safeguarding model as well as the TACT model which would assist in reducing the number of children on child protection plans and therefore the number of children coming into care would reduce. The overall cost to Peterborough had increased due to the number of children in care increasing, however it should be noted that there had been savings through children moving from residential care into foster care.
- Members were encouraged to note that the report had stated that *“the savings accrued would then be subject to a savings share, whereby 66% of savings against budget would be used by the council to support early help and prevention services”*. Clarification was sought as to what this meant and if more investment in resources would be required in the early help and prevention services to bring costs down in the longer term. Members were advised that the Peterborough early help services ran on limited resources but provided an excellent service and had been praised by Ofsted. Any savings would be put into the early help and prevention services. Examples were provided to Members of the type of services the early help and prevention services provided.

AGREED ACTIONS:

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to

1. Note the positive comments by OFSTED and others on the quality of the provision offered by the Permanency Service, delivered in partnership with the leading charity, TACT;
2. Note the progress now being made in recruitment of fostering households;
3. Note the proposals to vary the contract in relation to externally purchased placements for children in care and as a result of the requirement to develop Regional Adoption Agencies.

29. SEND REFORMS

The Head of SEN and Inclusion Services, accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University, introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the progress towards the implementation of SEND reforms since November 2017. Additionally the report provided early feedback from the LGA SEND peer review and information about the actions taken so far related to the joint Peterborough and Cambridgeshire SEND Strategy.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members sought clarification as to which stakeholders were involved in producing the draft PCC and CCC SEND strategy and wanted to know if this included special schools. Members were advised that a core group assisted with the strategy but schools were not involved in the group. The strategy was high level but when the strategy was implemented schools would be involved.
- Members commented that feedback had been received from Family Voice that the process to put the Education, Health and Care Plans in place was still taking too long. Members were informed that performance relating to the new EHC plans had greatly improved with a 90% rate within the time frame being regularly achieved. Officers were carrying their highest caseloads of approximately 500 cases however assessments were taking place within a statutory 20 week period.
- Members referred to the draft strategy at Appendix 1 of the report and in particular section 4.2, paragraph: *“Deliver in the right place at the right time”* and wanted to know who would take on the responsibility of making this happen. Officers assured Members that this was not just a ‘tick box’ exercise and that the quality of the EHC plans was very important. Consideration was being given to looking at difference ways of getting the young person’s voice heard and getting young people engaged with the strategy. Work had recently taken place with the Peterborough City College and Peterborough Regional College to look young people who had recently gone through the statutory assessment process to do workshops and focus groups with them to see what the experience was actually like for them. Whilst the process was a statutory 20 weeks it needed to be easily assessable to young people. The colleges were keen to continue this work to ensure that qualitative feedback was continued to be provided on a regular basis.
- Some Members commented that it would have been useful to have been provided with more information on what the SEND Reforms were about within the report.
- EHC plans were funded from the schools SEN budget which would provide for basic provisions to be put in place. When a child had an EHC plan put in place it detailed what needed to be put in place and would identify any Top-Ups required. The funding had not risen for a while and demand was rising but the budget was being used in the best way possible.
- It was noted that the number of children looked after with SEN in Peterborough (37.6%) remained higher than the national average, including the number of children with EHC plans (34.4% against a national average of 26.7%). Why was this? Officers advised that the issue was that Peterborough was being compared with national averages but Peterborough was not a national average authority. A better comparison would be to compare with similar authorities. A lot of children will be looked after but some of the EHC plans may not be monitored by Peterborough.

- Members noted the LGA suggestion that the authority needed to consider how data could be used to help move on and wanted to know who this might be achieved. Members were informed that the challenge was to bring SEN data together. There was a data dashboard in place which included health, social care and education data but the question was how the data could be used more effectively.
- The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University praised the work that the Head of SEN and Inclusion Services had done to implement the SEND reforms in Peterborough. SEND was everyone's concern e.g. Councillors, parents, officers etc. and it was therefore important that everyone commented on the draft strategy.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to

1. Acknowledge the success of relevant officers in meeting the deadline for transfer of statements to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC plans) in advance of the statutory date set.
2. Offer their support to relevant officers involved in taking forward a multi-agency and inclusive approach to provision for children and young people with SEND in Peterborough
3. Endorse the actions taken so far to produce a joint Peterborough and Cambridgeshire SEND strategy and implementation plan by September 2019

30. DEVELOPMENT OF SHARED APPROACHES AND RESOURCES IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES TO DATE AND CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The report was introduced by the Service Director, Children and Safeguarding accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, the purpose of which was to provide Committee Members with a summary of areas where shared approaches to deliver children's services have been developed between Peterborough and Cambridgeshire.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses included:

- Members sought clarification on whether Cabinet were considering sharing more services. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services advised Members that shared services across both councils were being looked at in light of diminishing funding from central government, however there were no business plans being put forward at this stage.
- Concern was raised that the personal service provided to children will be lost and queried whether the savings achieved through shared services would be reinvested into children's services. Members were informed that the direct face to face services to children and young people would still be delivered by the same social workers in Peterborough to the children and young people of Peterborough and the same would apply to the social workers and children and young people in Cambridgeshire. The shared services element included such services as quality assurance and learning and development offers that benefit children and young people but indirectly. There were no savings attached to this element of the shared services model. Peterborough and Cambridgeshire going forward would be using the same ICT system called Liquid Logic which Peterborough were already using.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to

1. Note the progress in developing shared services in a range of areas relevant to

- children's services in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire;
2. Note the opportunities for increasing resilience of services, improving outcomes for service users or both that follow from the development of shared services to date;
 3. Provide support to officers to continue to develop shared approaches to service delivery where this makes sense in terms of improving outcomes, increasing resilience or value for money or any combination thereof, subject to further scrutiny as appropriate.

31. EDUCATION REVIEW MONITORING REPORT

The Service Director for Education introduced the report accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University. The report provided Members with an update on progress made on implementing the recommendations contained within the Education Review report since the last report was presented to the Committee on 12 July 2018.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses included:

- Members commented that there appeared to be a difference in the way nursery's and pre-schools were structured and run with regard to preparing children for school. Was there any funding that could be put into nursery's and pre-schools so that they could be structured to provide training and resources to ensure that these establishments were all working in the same way in preparing children for school readiness. The Director of Education advised that there was already initiatives in place to provide information and a better understanding to the early year's settings of what their role was in assisting children in transitioning to and preparing them for school. Reception teachers were also now visiting the Early Years setting and sitting with children to understand what was needed to prepare for the children starting in the reception year. Having recently visited some early year's settings the Director commented that the feedback received was that children were now starting nursery and pre-schools with a much lower baseline than previously. Whilst the early year's settings were adding good value the children were not necessarily reaching school readiness before starting reception. The challenge was to understand what was happening with parenting earlier and understanding what other services were being provided for the 0 to 5 year olds and think about what can be done to assist in the development of the children. There was very little budget and the issue was more about getting the primary schools and the Early Years settings to work more closely together.
- The Cabinet Member advised that the council had a School Readiness Board which has proved to be very effective and were currently putting out pamphlets called 'Start' which were for parents, schools, teachers etc. to advise on how children can become more ready for schools.
- The shortage of school governors was an issue with regard to knowledge and skills gaps. A survey had been sent out to schools to try and identify the skills gaps amongst the current cohort of governors. The information will be analysed to see where the gaps in skills were. A new website will be launched specifically for governors to assist in attracting more school governors. The local authority were assisting the Academies in identifying school governors.
- Members referred to paragraph 4.17 of the report which referred to a survey undertaken of schools requesting feedback on the performance of the education services and sought clarification with regard to the ongoing relationship of the education service with Academy's. Members were advised that over the last few years there had been less co-operation with the Academy Trusts and the survey highlighted that more collaboration and working together would be welcomed.
- How well prepared were the Peterborough schools for the change in the new Ofsted framework which would be implemented in 2019. Members were advised that a conference would be held in November for all schools to attend at which a senior Ofsted inspector would be in attendance to go through the curriculum changes. The National

Ofsted conference was also being hosted in Peterborough. There were some amazing curriculum offers already in Peterborough and curriculum was a main focus.

- Members congratulated the Cabinet Member and Director on a positive report.
- Members noted that the Committee would only receive validated examination data in March and felt that this was too late. Governors and schools received unvalidated data in September and therefore recommended that the Committee also receive the unvalidated data in September to ensure they were able to provide effective scrutiny when the data was released. The Director advised that he could only provide the data that was in the public domain and would provide this at the September meeting.
- Members noted that there were now several types of schools within Peterborough and questioned whether this made the LEA's role much harder. Members were informed that this was true as it was a much more complex educational environment but this did not mean that the LEA could not work with the different partners to improve educational outcomes in Peterborough.
- Members referred to paragraph 4.21, Admissions and Appeals. Members sought clarification as to whether there was evidence to show that Academies were not accepting the lower ability students to ensure their educational attainment outcomes were better than they might have been. Members were informed that this was a national issue however the perception with regard to Peterborough was that there was a good system in place regarding exclusions and understanding exclusion data, there was a good Pupil Referral Unit and on the rare occasions that a pupil may have been refused this has been brought to the attention of the education services team and has been dealt with as this would not be tolerated. There was no reason to believe that this was an issue in Peterborough.
- Co-opted Member, Parish Councillor Susie Lucas asked the committee if they would consider making a recommendation for the Committee to receive unvalidated examination data for Key Stages 1, 2, 4 and 5 from all schools across the city in September. Councillor Ellis put forward the recommendation seconded by Councillor Lane and the Committee unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDATION

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend that the Director of Education provide the Committee with a report to their September 2019 meeting providing the unvalidated examination data for Key Stages 1, 2, 4 and 5 from all schools across the city.

AGREED ACTIONS:

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the contents of the report and the actions being taken
2. Support both Elected Members and Officers in their efforts to support and challenge schools to improve outcomes for children and young people in Peterborough.

32. 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.

AGREED ACTIONS:

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the latest version of the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions.

33. WORK PROGRAMME 2018 -2019

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2018 - 2019 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to note the work programme for 2018 – 2019.

34. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

28 November 2018, Joint Scrutiny of the Budget Meeting
3 January, 2019, Children and Education Scrutiny Committee

CHAIRMAN
7.00pm to 8.36pm