

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING
HELD AT 7PM ON THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2020
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillors J Goodwin (Chairman), R Brown, G Casey, A Coles, N Day, A Dowson, T Haynes, H Skibsted, S Lane, L Robinson, B Rush,

Co-opted Members: Peter Cantley, Rizwan Rahemtulla and Parish Councillors Junaid Bhatti, and Susie Lucas.

Also Present: Councillor Ayres, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education, Skills and University.
Sue Baldwin, Regional Schools Commissioner

Officers Present: Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Executive Director, People and Communities
Jonathan Lewis, Service Director, Education
Lou Williams, Service Director,

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Coles and Councillor D Over. Councillor A Coles was in attendance as substitute for L Coles and Councillor Brown was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Over.

Apologies were also received from co-opted members Alistair Kingsley, Clare Watchorn, and Flavio Vettese

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations made.

49. MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON:

- 17 December 2019 - Children and Education Scrutiny Committee Meeting
- 13 January 2020 - Children and Education Scrutiny Committee Meeting
- 12 February 2020 - Children and Education Scrutiny Committee – Call-In Meeting

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 December 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 January 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 February 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record subject to the following: Page 22, paragraph 46, bullet point 1. The wording “*There were **several** important facts that had been taken into consideration before agreeing the Executive Decision to open a Roman Catholic School*”, should have been “*There were **eleven** important facts that had been taken into consideration before agreeing the Executive Decision to open a Roman Catholic School*”. This error was highlighted by Councillor Ayres, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education, Skills and the University.

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

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

51. ATTENDANCE OF SUE BALDWIN, REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER

The Director of Education introduced the report and welcomed the Regional Schools Commissioner for the East of England and North East London. The Director advised the Committee that there had been a lot of negative press about academies and the way they worked with the LEA’s, however this was not the case in Peterborough.

The Regional Schools Commissioner gave a brief summary of her role which covered the East of England and North East London region. The following key areas were highlighted:

- 85% of children in the Peterborough area went to a good or outstanding school.
- There were over 1000 academies in the East of England and North East London region. The work of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) was undertaken in partnership with various organisations including schools, Local Authorities, Diocese, Ofsted and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFA).
- Meetings also took place on a formal basis with the Chair and Executive Leader of 130 Academy Trusts to discuss school standards, financial stability and governance. Prior to the meeting intelligence was obtained from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and Local Authority around governance at the Trust to pick up on any issues e.g. parental complaints.
- The type of work undertaken included school improvement, parental concerns, and admissions. The role also included Stewardship, accountability, challenge and decision making around interventions with inadequate LEA schools and academies.
- Only a maintained school that needed to go with a new sponsor would get a two-year break from an Ofsted Inspection to give them time to improve.
- Decisions would be made around issuing termination warning notices to Academy Trusts if there was a feeling that the Trust was not capable of moving a school on into ‘Good’ or better.
- Also had a support role for the rolling out of the Dept of Education School Improvement Offer
- Responsibility for school improvement still rests with the Governing Body for maintained schools and the Trust for academies but the Regional Schools Advisor and Director for Education could still challenge them and identify any funding available if required.
- Overview and stewardship were done in conjunction with the EFA.
- Academy Trusts must comply with the Academies Financial Handbook as a condition of their funding agreement. It provided an overarching framework for implementation of effective financial management and control. This also included the setting of executive pay, financial probity, the Nolan Principles and overall governance.
- Work was undertaken with Local Authorities on place planning and efficiency, including running presumptions for new schools. This currently involved the Wave 2 (special schools and special provision) and Wave 14 for the new free schools.

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

- The annual cycle of Academy Reviews would be used to monitor improvements made to pupil outcomes in academies following conversion. This involved meeting with 130 Academy Trusts to discuss standards, patterns and specific cohorts of children and why they have or have not made improvements. Should specific concerns arise further direct support would be provided.
- Whilst the Regional Schools Commissioner for the East of England and North East London declined to comment on the progress of all local academies, Queen Catherine Academy of the Tomas Deacon Education Trust was highlighted as it had now achieved a "Good" Ofsted rating after many years of difficulty.
- Peterborough's position in the annual league tables had been around 150/152. The standard was however improving but that was also true for the rest of the country. To increase the rate of change, work was ongoing with the Local Authority and the multi Academy Trusts within Early Years to ensure children were learning the phonics and were "school ready." Consideration needed to be given to the wider community rather than just school children within a given Trust and there had been an increase in maturity with different Trusts working together. There were concerns regarding standards in reading and writing in primary schools and GCSE attainment had slipped back, which may have been as a result of the new GCSE system. Schools would continue to be challenged towards achieving improvements.
- The responsibility for improving standards in an Academy sat with the Trustees.
- Good governors were required, and the Local Governing Body should focus on safeguarding and outcomes.
- The annual review always referred to governance and the Scheme of Delegation, which would be challenged if it was considered inappropriate. Trusts with poor governance who did not comply with best practice would not be permitted to expand or to sponsor a struggling academy. A struggling school would not be placed within a struggling Trust and any requests would involve a full analysis of standards and finance to confirm the Trust's capability to support another school.
- A couple of academies in Peterborough were "Inadequate" and considered to be of concern.
- The Academies Financial Handbook contained clauses regarding the setting of executive pay in Multi Academy Trusts. The Chief Executive of the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) would contact a Trust if there were concerns about the level of executive pay.
- Challenging behaviour and SEND issues were identified either formally following an Ofsted inspection, or upon receipt of a complaint. Should a complaint be received, the school would be challenged, and the issues worked through locally with the Trust and the Local Authority considering all the information. Should real concerns persist, an Ofsted inspection would be requested. There were systems in place to liaise with the Local Authority and follow through complaints and concerns.
- Parental complaints surrounding a specific academy Trust would be dealt with by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Regional Schools Commissioner would be notified. The Commissioner would work with the EFSA and the Local Authority who would each carry out their own investigations. The Commissioner would collate the results and invite the academy to respond to the findings. If there was no cause for complaint but rather a misunderstanding, the Commissioner would work with both the Trust and the parent to understand the issue. Should the complaint be found to be justified, the resolution would be decided on a case by case basis, depending on the severity. Safeguarding issues required assurance from the Trust Board that the issues had been resolved however fundamental breakdowns would be referred to the Local Authority and/or Ofsted to make a full judgement, which could ultimately result in the school being moved to another Trust.

- Ofsted did not approve the Guided Choice system, where the less academic pupils were guided towards a reduced choice of subjects. Where identified, it was likely that the school would be awarded an “Inadequate” judgement which would automatically direct them towards intervention by legislation. The worst case scenario for an academy would be that funding was withdrawn and the school transferred to another sponsor.
- The RSC worked with the Local Authority to ensure all different groups of children including those at risk, those vulnerable and those at risk of harm could access a good education irrespective of the school they attended.
- The RSC felt that a professionalised clerking service was considered critical however had no preference between paying a professional Governing body or using volunteers. Training and development of Governors was considered essential.
- Members commented that schools that had joined a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) could gain a couple of extra years to bring about improvements before the next Ofsted inspection, often with the injection of additional resources from a successful Trust Capacity Fund bid. Those schools which were unappealing to MATs, such as small primary schools, could not benefit from this advantageous additional funding. The RSA assured the Committee that the Ofsted holiday only applied in specific circumstances where the school had been subjected to a specific academy order and not an academy that moved between Trusts. Very little money was available on conversion to an academy and this was mainly used for the legal costs incurred. There were limited funds available for use in areas where there was a need for Trusts to take on more schools. Smaller schools, with 40-50 children, could work collaboratively to achieve the benefits of a larger entity without losing their individual allocation of funds. Some small schools which were in difficulty could be absorbed by the MATs.
- Changes to the national funding formulae from central government had been applied and additional funding would be received in due course.

AGREED ACTIONS

1. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered and **RESOLVED** to note the background contents of the report to aid the discussion in the meeting around the Regional Schools Commissioner and her responsibilities.
2. The Committee also requested that the Regional Schools Commissioner attend a future meeting of the committee in the new municipal year to provide a further update on her work.
3. The Children and Education Committee requested that the Service Director for Education circulate details of funding formulas.

52. SERVICE DIRECTOR REPORT FOR CHILDREN AND SAFEGUARDING AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER PROGRESS REPORT

The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding introduced the report which provided Members with an overview of key performance measures within Children’s Services, information regarding the transfer of the Permanency Service into the Local Authority and updated the Committee on the likely future Ofsted oversight and relevant activities and functions completed by the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services. The report related to the corporate priorities relating to the safeguarding of vulnerable people and the Children in Care Pledge.

There had been a change in the number of children in care nationally with a significant increase from 69,000 in 2014 to 78,000. The rate of children in care in Peterborough was moving towards the average for England and this result was the outcome of the Family Safeguarding model adopted by the council about two and a half years ago which had seen the number of children in care reducing. The number of children currently subject to Child Protection Plans was at one of its lowest levels.

Recruitment had been challenging with particular stresses in the summer which had affected performance, with some assessments not completed on time. This situation had improved however recruitment continued to be an issue. A new recruitment campaign had been launched to increase the number of permanent social workers.

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

- It was envisaged that the new university could be involved in the recruitment supply chain for social workers.
- Child protection cases should not be open for more than 18 months. When a child has been on a plan for more than 9 months a Head of Service would review the case and if over 12 months a legal planning meeting would be convened.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education, Skills and University had recently attended a quality assurance procedure review for a child who had transitioned from Child Protection to Child in Need following help given to the young family, which was very encouraging and good to see.
- Every Early Help Assessment case is passed through a quality assurance process with the Early Help Team. The Assistant Director of Children's Services carried out regular thematic audits on the quality of Early Help in the city and there was an Outcomes Tracker for all Early Help work which contributed towards the payment by results claims. Peterborough was in the top 10% of successful long-term outcomes for those cases and the last Ofsted report was complimentary on the quality of Early Help in the city.
- County Lines involved young people being persuaded to supply illegal substances and induced into a gang culture. The Safe Team were a team dedicated towards those at risk of criminal exploitation, who worked with the police. Whist an important issue, County Lines was considered a relatively small risk to young people when compared with other challenges, the biggest cause of injury and death to young people was suicide rather than County Lines.
- The Liquid Logic software used for recording, monitoring and referrals had recently been updated and systems used in Peterborough and Cambridge had been aligned which was an advantage. There were still some issues with reporting referrals, and it could be that a bespoke adjustment would be required which IT were investigating.
- The year end results regarding dental visits by young people in care showed 94% were in receipt of dental care, however there were a larger number of older young people in care than younger and the older group were less inclined to visit the dentist. Children needed to be reminded of the importance of regular dental checks and those who had missed appointments were often those who had moved placements and had not had the opportunity to build up trust with their carers.
- The Committee were concerned about the time lag in reporting educational achievement for children in care. Members were informed that the virtual school cohort was very small and therefore was not a problem to track individual progress. The statistical information gathered would not be useful for forward planning as the cohort was so small. The Personal Education Plans were used to track individual progress and was kept up to date.

AGREED ACTIONS

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

1. Note the content of the report in relation to performance by Children's Social Care and actions being taken to maintain and improve this in certain areas;
2. Note the brief update in relation to the transfer of the Permanency Service back to the Local Authority;
3. Note the information relating to oversight by Ofsted through the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services framework;

4. Note the work of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services in carrying out her duties.

53. BEST START IN LIFE PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT

The Executive Director for People and Communities introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the progress on the strategy Best Start in Life, a 5 year strategy which aimed to improve life chances of children (pre-birth to 5 years) in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by addressing inequalities, narrowing the gap in attainment and improving the outcomes for all children, including disadvantaged children and families which had seen the bringing together of all agencies to work together as one team.

All professionals had now signed up, including midwifery and health visitors. Each reported to different authorities with different management structures, including Children's Centres and community workers, Early Years Educational Advisors and Early Years settings. Three high level outcomes had been approved and an agreement had been reached for all groups to work together as a team.

The new delivery model had now been agreed and three trial sites were anticipated which would most likely be Fenland, North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

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

- Multi Agent Support Panels had been developed in three locations to encourage those working with young people to identify the needs and challenges facing that child and present the findings to a multi-agency group of professionals from several disciplines. They would then consider the case and suggest the best interventions to meet the needs of the child and family. Waiting times were not thought to be long and often referrals were made to support services ahead of the pending assessment.
- Operational concerns would first be raised via informal discussions with local management should the system not appear to be working in any section of the network. If necessary, issues could be escalated to the Joint Child Health & Wellbeing Commissioning Board which comprised of mainly commissioners and Chief Executives, chaired by the Executive Director, People and Communities.
- The Committee considered housing availability to be an issue. Members were advised that involving housing providers within the strategy development was seen as key however it had proved difficult as there were so many different providers. Children's Centres and Early Help workers did however have good connections with housing providers. It was recognised that without a place to live, any therapy would not be effective.
- Overcrowded living accommodation was outside the scope of the Best Start in Life Programme; however, any known cases could be reported to the Executive Director, People and Communities.
- Social Workers were engaging in a different type of conversation with families, to get to know the person and more about their family, their existing support and environment and asking what support would make the most difference. Positive changes to the ways of thinking had resulted in a less formulaic approach.
- The North West Peterborough Good Neighbours Scheme, a charity set up locally to help communities support each other, will sit under the banner of Think Communities, which wrapped around the Best Start in Life Strategy. On a long-term basis, the parishes could have a part to play in follow on support.
- Parish Councillor Susie Lucas advised the committee she was a Trustee of the North West Peterborough Good Neighbours Scheme and explained that appointments would include a Director of Services and Support, a co-ordinator and a team of volunteers which they had already started to recruit across the Parishes. Community members would pick up local issues, working together with the charitable sector and statutory bodies.

- Members were concerned that there were few Health Visitor clinics or Children's Centres in some parts of the county which could result in geographical variation across the service. The Executive Director, People and Communities advised data was still being collected, and once available would allow focus to be on the areas of greatest need, using the assets available in that particular area. However, it was unlikely there would be centres located in the rural areas. In areas where there were no facilities, service would still be improved by midwifery and Health Visitors working together.
- Continuity of care from pre-birth to 12 months with a single point of contact had shown better health outcomes. This formed part of the Best Start in Life strategy and was included as a mandatory requirement in the midwifery service of the NHS and a pilot was currently underway in North Cambridgeshire.
- Training would be delivered to upskill workers in childcare settings which most families accessed at some point to try to engage with hard to reach families. This stage was under development and had not yet commenced.
- The challenge would be to keep the momentum, particularly if the priorities within the different agencies changed. The Executive Board could be consulted if needed with any issues, to keep the programme on track and maintain the level of enthusiasm.
- The Executive Director, People and Communities had recently attended the Secondary Head Teachers Conference to present the Best Start in Life Programme. Head Teachers had expressed an interest in the programme, wanting to be engaged and indicated a preference to be seen more as community leaders rather than just Head Teachers.
- Members asked if the next update could include only the updated items and items set out in the action points.

AGREED ACTIONS:

1. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the progress in the design and implementation of a new countywide integrated delivery model.
2. The Executive Director, People and Communities agreed to notify the committee of the current waiting times for Panel review.
3. The Executive Director, People and Communities agreed to include an update on the Continuity of Care from pre-birth to 12 months in the next report in September.
4. The Executive Director, People and Communities agreed to include an update on the delivery of the programme into secondary schools in September.

54. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, containing key decisions which the Leader of the Council anticipated Cabinet or Cabinet Members would take over 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 current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions which identified any relevant items for inclusion within their work programme and requests further information.

CHAIRMAN
7.00pm to 8.50pm