

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 6.00PM, ON
MONDAY, 15 JULY 2024
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Skibsted (Chair), Shaheed (Vice-Chair), Bisby, Geraghty, Hemraj, Khan, McNally and Warren.

Youth Councillor: Abigail Adebayo

Youth MP: Danielle Daboh.

Officers Present: Madia Afzal, Democratic Services Officer
John Gregg, Executive Director for Children's Services
Sara Graves, Service Director for Children's Social Care and Targeted Support

Also Present: Councillor Katy Cole: Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Sarah Hillier and Daisy Blakemore-Creedon, Cllr McNally was in attendance as a substitute.

Co-opted Members: Sameena Aziz, Jane Taylor-Pitt and Andrew Read.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

On the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions item, Cllr Bisby declared that some of the decisions pertaining to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee had been made by him in his former role as Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

On the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions item, Cllr Cole declared an interest on the Academy Dining Hall Extension - KEY/03JUNE24/07 decision in that she works for the Academy.

3. MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. CALL-IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISION

None were received for this meeting.

5. **APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS 2024/2025**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the appointment of Co-opted Members in accordance with the Council's Constitution Part 3, Section 4 – Overview and Scrutiny Functions.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval from the Committee to appoint Parish Councillor Jane Taylor Pitt and Sameena Aziz as Non-Voting Co-opted Members for the municipal year 2024/25 to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee.

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and explained that the nominations for Co-opted Members had been put forward by the Parish Council Liaison Working Group and that the appointments were to be reviewed annually.

The Committee unanimously agreed to the appointment of Sameena Aziz as a non-voting Co-opted Member for the municipal year 2024/25. However, the appointment of Parish Councillor Jane Taylor Pitt was deferred to the next meeting of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee as Members decided that it would be best to ask questions of her prior to her formal appointment.

AGREED ACTIONS:

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Appoint Sameena Aziz as a Co-opted Member with no voting rights to represent the Muslim Community for the municipal year 2024/2025. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year.

6. **REVIEW OF 2023/2024 AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2024/2025**

The Democratic Services Officer presented the report which considered the 2023/2024 year in review and looked at the work programme for the new municipal year 2024/25 to determine the Committees priorities. Members also noted the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

- The Committee requested that skills be placed on the Work Programme for 2024/25 as skills within Peterborough hadn't been reviewed or scrutinised by the Committee.
- The Democratic Services Officer referred Members to Section 4 of the Constitution, Overview and Scrutiny Functions and confirmed that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee did not cover skills. It was further advised that the responsibility for skills lied with the Executive Director for Place and Economy and that it was a matter for the Growth, Resources and Scrutiny Committee.
- The Committee queried whether the responsibility for colleges and post-16 education lied with the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee. The Committee were advised that certain functions relating to higher education and further education were covered by the Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee.
- In terms of the Committee's query on apprenticeships, Members were advised that clarification would be provided at the Committee's next Group Reps meeting.

AGREED ACTIONS:

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

1. Considers items presented to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee during 2023/2024 and make recommendations on the future monitoring of these items where necessary.

2. Determines its priorities and approves the draft work programme for 2024/2025 attached at Appendix 1.

3. Notes the Terms of Reference for this Committee as set out in Part 3, Section 4, Overview and Scrutiny Functions and in particular paragraph 2.1 item 3, Children and Education Scrutiny Committee and paragraph 3.5 Health Issues as attached at Appendix 2.

7. SERVICE DIRECTOR REPORT: TARGET SUPPORT AND SAFEGUARDING - UPDATE ACTIVITY SINCE THE INSPECTION

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the activity in Children's Services since the ILACS inspection which took place from 27th November to 8th December 2023.

The Service Director for Children's Social Care and Targeted Support introduced the report and key points raised included:

- Some of the key areas within the report were detailed.
- The eight priority areas which Children's Services were required to consider as part of the improvement work were relayed to Members of the Committee.
- Reference was made to the transformation agenda that was overseeing the improvements within the directorate.
- The Committee were advised that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had successfully relocated to Sand Martin House.
- Members were updated on the transformation within the Children's Disability Team. It was noted that the Service Director for Children's Social Care and Targeted Support had recently taken on responsibility for the Children's Disability Team to enable the directorate to support and understand children in a more effective manner.
- It was noted that Peterborough was a fast growing and diverse community with a significant number of children and families living in areas of deprivation and that Children's Services leaders were committed to their betterment.
- The significant financial input into Children's Services to better and improve the areas where the need for improvement has been identified was relayed to the Committee.
- Members were advised that the support from stakeholders to date had been crucial and that Children's Services sought to further develop these partnerships on their journey to improvement.

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

- The Committee queried the capacity within the Safeguarding and Emergency Duty Service Teams and clarification on the improvements within the Care Leaver's Service was sought.

- In terms of the Emergency Duty Team, Members were advised that this was under review and that an options appraisal had been drafted. Members were further advised that the appraisal was being considered by senior managers.
- With respect to Safeguarding, it was noted that Safeguarding was a shared service with Cambridgeshire and that the inspection had highlighted concerns around quality and capacity. However, Members were assured that the decoupling from Cambridgeshire had provided the directorate with an opportunity to reset the relationship on a commissioning basis.
- Members were further advised that the financial investment sought to address these concerns and the ongoing activity in respect to recruitment was detailed.
- Clarification on the international recruitment within the social work teams was sought with one Member querying the number of new recruits and whether the positions had been filled.
- In response, it was confirmed that the 12 posts had been filled and that the directorate would continue to review the demand and act accordingly.
- The Committee queried why the directorate had opted to recruit from overseas, the country they had recruited from and whether the new recruits possessed the required skillset.
- Members were advised that Children's Services had opted for international recruitment due to the national shortage of good social workers and to support the reduction of caseloads.
- Furthermore, it was confirmed that the 12 international recruits would be joining the service from South Africa, and that Children's Services had opted for this region due to the similarities in their model of social work.
- Moreover, it was emphasized that the solution to the capacity issues lied in a range of options which were to be outlined within a recruitment strategy. It was also acknowledged that the issues would take a number of years to resolve.
- On the development of the fostering service, Officers were pleased to note that the directorate was on track to meet and even exceed set targets as they had already filled 12/15 positions.
- It was advised that it was not possible to prevent other authorities from acquiring the directorate's Newly Qualified Social Workers. However, it was hoped that the support on offer would encourage retention.
- The Executive Director for Children's Services highlighted his vision for Children's Services and the Committee were advised that the directorate sought to transform its social work and management teams and strengthen its learning and development offer.
- The Committee queried where the 12 new recruits would leave the directorate in terms of numbers. In response, it was confirmed that the directorate would be still short by a significant number.
- In terms of the background of the 12 new social workers, members were advised that the new cohort were experienced and not newly qualified social workers.
- Clarification on 'informal soft market testing' and 'good quality, local homes' under 4.14 of the report was sought.
- Members were advised that the Commissioning Team for Children's Services had a range of frameworks which they used for the purchasing of placements for children from the private sector, and that many of the placements were due for renewal, so the team had begun informal soft market testing with local providers.
- Members were further advised that the testing to date had been well received.
- In terms of the query on 'good quality, local homes', the Executive Director

for Children's Services recognised the moral imperative to keep children local. However, Members were advised that this was reliant on a healthy and vibrant fostering service.

- With respect to the relocation of the MASH to Sand Martin House and whether this was on target, the Committee were advised that completion was set for the end of July.
- On the actions for home schooled children, Members were advised that these were under review.
- On the support for care leavers under 4.1 of the report, the Committee queried whether the support on offer was on a one-to-one basis.
- In response, it was confirmed that the directorate was offering both one-to-one and group sessions and that the type of support was dependant on the young person's needs.
- Clarification on 4.17 of the report - specific health resources for care leavers was sought.
- Members were advised that the dental aspect and healthcare costs were under review. Furthermore, Members were updated on the local dental provision for care leavers.

The following recommendation was put forward by Cllr Skibsted and seconded by Cllr Bisby:

That Officers present information at each Children and Education Scrutiny Committee this year, of the specific progress mapped to the recommendations from Ofsted, with examples of specific initiatives, how they are being assessed and the progress being made.

AGREED ACTIONS:

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

1. Notes the contents of the report and agrees to continue to support officers in delivering continuing improvement.
2. Present information at each Children and Education Scrutiny Committee this year, of the specific progress mapped to the recommendations from Ofsted, with examples of specific initiatives, how they are being assessed and the progress being made.

8. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Chair introduced the report which included the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions containing decisions that the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the plan and where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

The Committee requested further information on the Healthy Child Commissioning Approach decision - KEY/03JUNE24/03. Members were advised that the decision sought to improve the health outcomes for children across the city with a focus on hearing and sight tests, weight and height for pupils in year 6. Members were further advised that services were commissioned by Public Health and monitored pupil's health health through their educational journey.

AGREED ACTIONS:

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

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as being the 23rd of September 2024.

CHAIR

Meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 6.55pm