

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 6.00PM, ON
MONDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2024
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

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

Youth Councillors: Pranav Aggarwal and Amelia Ishan

Co-opted Members: Sameena Aziz, Dr Andrew Stone, Canon Andrew Read and Parish Councillor Jane Taylo-Pitt

Officers Present:

Charlotte Cameron, Senior Democratic Services Officer
John Gregg, Executive Director for Children's Services

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Blakemore-Creedon and Jenkins. Councillors Bi and Strangward were in attendance as substitutes.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Cole, Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were none.

12. MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 JULY 2024

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

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

None were received for this meeting.

14. SUPPLEMENTARY 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 as Non-Voting Co-opted Member for the municipal year 2024/25 to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee.

The Senior 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.

Members acknowledged that their request for further information had been met and were happy to agree to the appointment.

The Committee unanimously agreed to the appointment of Parish Councillor Jane Taylor-Pitt as a non-voting Co-opted Member for the municipal year 2024/25.

AGREED ACTIONS:

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to appoint Parish Councillor Taylor-Pitt as a Co-opted Member with no voting rights to rural areas for the municipal year 2024/2025. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year.

15. 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.

- Members were advised that the Delay and Deferral policy was where children had not progressed through school with their peer group.

AGREED ACTIONS

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

16. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PEER REVIEW

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to an overview of the findings from the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge of Corporate Parenting which took place on the 17th and 18th July 2024. The outcome of this review was a number of recommendations to support the effectiveness of Corporate Parenting in Peterborough City Council.

The Executive Director for Children's Services introduced the report and advised that it was a summary of the LGA peer review for arrangements of the Corporate Parenting Committee. (CPC)

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

- Members noted that the CPC had become overly bureaucratic and has lost focus from what its role should be.
- It was acknowledged that it would take a significant piece of work to improve CPC, this would be supported by the LGA.
- Officers were looking at a range of models to ensure that it adds value to the children.
- Members were advised of the work of the House Project in those leaving care. The Council would seek to provide the best opportunities for care leavers.
- Members noted that Chauffeurs Cottage would become a base for care leavers to grow and work with peers. They would be involved in the development of the site.

- The Senior Democratic Services Officer noted that there had been a live petition relating to Chauffeurs Cottage that had not yet completed.
- Members noted that the report had been brief and requested more detail in future reports.
- Officers acknowledged that they would like to keep looked after children locally, but the reality was that it was dependent on availability.
- The fostering service had been relaunched in September 2024 with a renewed package of support.
- Member were advised of the 2-year incubation period for foster carers and the extensive process that had to be followed before they would be approved.
- Members sought clarification on the difference between a corporate parent and a foster parent. A corporate parent related to the state ownership of parenting children in care where the children are subject to a court order and the council shares parental responsibility with the birth parents. A foster parent acts as the parent of the child and discharges the council's duty for that child.
- Members were advised that work had been undertaken to allow appropriate prioritisation of housing allocations.
- The Council had passed a motion for care leavers to become a protected characteristic.
- The ambition was for the service to always be there if a looked after child needed it. There would be commitment to support whether it be to hear success stories or signpost them to further support.
- Members requested a follow up report with detail against the recommendations and progress of the improvements for the CPC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee reviewed the contents of the report and agreed to support officers in delivering the recommendations identified as part of the Local Government Association Peer Challenge.

AGREED ACTIONS:

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee requested that Officers schedule a further report on the progress of the recommendations for later in the year.

17. SERVICE DIRECTOR TARGETTED SUPPORT AND SAFEGUARDING – OFSTED PROGRESS PLAN AND ACTION MONITORING

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the summary and overview of monitoring and progress in respect of Children's Services Ofsted Inspection Action Plan, implemented following the ILACS inspection which took place from 27th November to 8th December 2023. Peterborough Children's Services was graded Inadequate for 'Overall Effectiveness,' and eight key improvement recommendations were identified.

The Executive Director for Children's Services introduced the report and moved straight to questions.

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

- Members were advised that that Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub had moved to Sand Martin House but there was still work to be done.
- The volume of work in the system had been evaluated as teams were

overworked and understaffed. There had been a £2.5 million investment with 1.7 million directed at social workers on the frontline.

- Members queried what Ofsted would think if that came back tomorrow and were advised that there would be a narrative of improved performance and a stronger picture which recognised investment.
- A recent Ofsted letter had acknowledged that improvement partners had put the right things in the right place at the right time.
- The expectation was that all Managers conducted a dip sampling of cause studies each month to ensure self-regulated performance management.
- Members were advised that audit activity should reflect what Ofsted think which would demonstrate that the service area knew itself well.
- Members referred to children missing from education and Officers advised that additional capacity had been created to address the backlog of people who had not been seen for a significant period.
- There were financial constraints in all areas and the Executive Director advised that he had explored opportunities from within the existing resource to repurpose funds.
- Members referred to the Ofsted recommendations and asked Officers to consider a RAG rating system that could be presented to the Committee.
- Officers acknowledged the request for the action plan but raised concerns regarding it being shared in a public arena.
- Members requested information on the areas that were not functioning effectively as they were concerned that they could not scrutinise the improvements without the full picture.
- Members recognised the hard work of all Officers who had been part of the improvement journey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee reviewed the content of the report and agreed to continue to support officers in delivering continuing improvement.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee requested that Officers:

- Provide the Ofsted letter to scrutiny.
- Provide the action plan to scrutiny, with Officers considering how it can be adapted for public viewing.

18. MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

The SDSO introduced the report which enabled the committee to monitor and track the progress of recommendations made to the Executive or Officers at previous meetings.

- Members acknowledge that their recommendation from the July meeting had not been satisfied and would review it again at their next meeting.
- Members requested the Officers include more information in the reports that detailed how things were being achieved, any KPI's and any measurable targets.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the responses from Cabinet Members and Officers to recommendations made at previous meetings as attached in Appendix 1 to the report and provided feedback including whether further

monitoring of each recommendation was required.

19. WORK PROGRAMME 2024/2025

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which looked at the work programme for the municipal year 2024-2025 to determine the Committees priorities. Members were invited to make comments and suggestions.

- The Committee were asked to review their priorities after noting that the next agendas were oversubscribed.
- Officers advised that Key Stage 4 data was unvalidated and could be postponed.
- Members noted the duplication of the SEND report and asked for it to be taken to the March meeting.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee RESOLVED to note the work programme.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as being the 11 November 2024.

CHAIR

Meeting started at 6.00pm and finished 7.42pm