

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD IN THE  
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH  
ON 11 JUNE 2012**

**Present:** Councillors S Day (Chairman), Harper, J Peach, B Rush, B Saltmarsh, J Shearman and D Fower

**Also present** Alastair Kingsley Parent Governor Representative

**Officers in Attendance:** Malcolm Newsam Executive Director, Children's Services  
Adrian Chapman Head of Neighbourhood Services  
Belinda Evans Customer Service Manager  
Mark Sandhu Head of Customer Services  
Paulina Ford Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny  
Catherine Berriman Lawyer

**1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Arculus. Councillor Peach attended as substitute.

**2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2012**

The minutes of the meetings held on 12 March 2012 were approved as an accurate record.

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

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

**5. Introduction to Children's Services**

The Executive Director of Children's Services introduced the report and gave a presentation to the Committee which informed Members of the key areas covered by Children's Services. The following key points were highlighted:

Safeguarding, Families and Communities: Lead Officer - Assistant Director, Sue Westcott

Services provided within this area:

- Safeguarding
- Looked after Children
- Children with Disabilities
- Fostering
- Adoption
- Youth Offending Services

**Key Challenges for 2012:**

- Improve safeguarding
- Increase placement choice and adoptions
- Strengthen range of targeted preventative services

Education and Resources: Lead Officer - Assistant Director, Jonathan Lewis  
Services provided within this area:

- School Improvement and Governance
- Special Educational Needs
- Attendance, Behaviour and Pupil Referral
- Finance, Projects and Workforce Development
- School Place Planning and Buildings
- City College

Plus finance, capital and budget monitoring

**Key Challenges for 2012:**

- Implement new approaches to transform standards
- Improve outcomes for children with SEN
- Improve attainment for vulnerable learners

Commissioning and Prevention: Lead Officer – Assistant Director Wendi Ogle-Welbourn  
Services provided within this area:

- 8 – 19 Services
- Early Years and Children's Centres
- Children's Residential and Respite Care
- Commissioning prevention and early intervention

**Key Challenges for 2012:**

- Put in place systems that co-ordinate early intervention and prevention services
- Strengthen the Children's Trust
- Set up joint commissioning arrangements with health

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members were concerned that as the Council did not run the schools now how they were going to achieve the key challenge of implementing new approaches to transform standards. *Members were informed that the objective was to implement new approaches to transform standards. There was clarity about why the standards were low but less clarity about the strategies across the school community. This provided an opportunity to bring a new focus on what could be done and dispense with the things that did not have any impact. All authorities were being asked to reshape themselves in light of the new legislation. The statutory responsibility for raising standards still fell within the remit of the Director of Children's Services and there was a need to ensure collaboration across the city between the local authority and schools.*
- How would the authority refocus to raise attainment? *Members were advised that there was a need to refocus the way the local authority was structured in light of the new legislation. A much clearer strategy was needed around children with Special Educational Needs. There was also a big issue in Primary Schools regarding inward migration and this needed to be looked at.*
- Do you have any plans to implement a strategy for recruiting good quality school governors? *A good school improvement strategy would look at what was needed to get good school governance in place. If the local authority could influence the selection and training of governance and provide good support to governors it would improve the*

*process. The Director of Children's Services advised that he would bring a strategy to the Committee at a future date.*

- Alistair Kingsley proposed that Councillor Shearman and he work with the Head of School Improvement again to understand and present the 2012 examination results as this had proved beneficial to the Committee last year. The Chair and Members of the Committee agreed to this proposal.
- What was happening with regard to the appointment of a permanent Director of Children's Services? *Members were advised that the recruitment process would commence shortly to ensure someone was in place when the interim Director left.*

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

That the Committee note the report and

- (i) That a report on the action being taken on the nine Key Challenges identified within the presentation be brought to the committee at a future meeting. The Chair and Group Representatives to manage this through the work programme.
- (ii) That the Director of Children's Services bring to the Committee at a future meeting a strategy on recruitment and selection of school governors as part of the improving attainment programme.
- (iii) Alistair Kingsley, Co-opted Parent Governor Representative on the Committee and Councillor Shearman to work with the Head of School Improvement in presenting the 2012 Examination results to the Committee in September.

## **6. Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan**

The Head of Neighbourhoods introduced the report and advised members that the report provided details of an updated Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan which had been requested by the Committee at a meeting on 16 January 2012. The Child Poverty Act 2010 required local authorities to combat the causes and consequences of child poverty in local areas. Peterborough had chosen to deal with Child Poverty by addressing 'family poverty'. The poverty reduction objective was part of programme 2 in the Single Delivery Plan – Safeguarding the Most Vulnerable Families. The Peterborough Strategic Development Plan for poverty reduction and social mobility was continually being refined but activity had started to deliver outcomes in early intervention, financial inclusion and decent homes. The approach being taken had been three fold:

1. A short term hard hitting approach around working with targeted families where income may be an issue
2. Promotion of resilience; looking at skills that can be given to families and building a sense of community and a sense of pride
3. Developing longer term chances – looking at what sort of jobs needed to be created, what sort of opportunities were needed to help people to get themselves out of poverty.

The Head of Neighbourhoods went through the seven Strategic Objectives and Key Deliverables of the plan and advised that it would be brought back to the Committee again with further detail for approval.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- The Chair commented on the complexity of the plan and was concerned at how it might be achieved in reality and suggested that each member of the Committee may wish to assign themselves to one of the strands.

- Who are the members of the Poverty Executive Team? *Members were advised that there had been a need for a strong sense of leadership from officers within the authority and therefore a small but strong Executive team was pulled together consisting of Adrian Chapman, Head of Neighbourhoods (Chair), Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Assistant Director of Commissioning and Prevention and Leonie McCarthy, Social Inclusion Manager.*
- Members commented that there was no indication of the work that was already being undertaken and which objectives had already been started. There were also no timelines as to when the work would be completed. *The Head of Neighbourhoods confirmed that a lot of work was already being undertaken within the plan and suggested that a performance dashboard could be created for the seven strands to show the Committee how the plan was progressing.*
- The Child Poverty Act became law on 25 March 2010. Why had progress been so slow in providing a Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. *Members were advised that it had taken an immense amount of time to capture in one place all of the activity that was going on and there was still more work to do on this. It was a very complex agenda and the current plan was much more robust.*
- Members commented that there was a clear link between poverty and poor diet and poor diet and poor performance at school. *Members were informed that with regard to the health impact the plan went hand in hand with work being done in regard to the transition of the Public Health services to the Local Authority from April 2013. The Local Authority would have a statutory responsibility for insuring the health of its population and would have a much stronger influence in shaping interventions and in supporting healthy lifestyles.*
- Members commented that teenage conception rates had always been a problem in Peterborough. What objective within the plan did teenage pregnancies come under? *Members were advised that it cut across strand 4 improved education and personal development and strand 6 which included the promotion of healthy lifestyles.*
- Members were pleased to note that the Local Authority had been successful in a bid to be part of a pilot to increase the free two year old early education places and that it would provide 58 more places in the more deprived areas of Peterborough. Can you advise where these places will be? *Members were advised that the announcement had only been made a few weeks ago and that work would need to be done with DfE colleagues to establish the best use of the money.*
- Members had been advised that there had been some teething problems when the new organisations Barnardos and Spurgeons had taken over the commissioning of the children's centres. Had these problems been sorted out? *The Director of Children's Services believed that they had been resolved but if Members became aware of anything he requested that they let him know.*
- Members wanted to know how many families and young people in crisis were being provided with temporary housing. *The Head of Neighbourhoods advised that he did not have the information with him but would provide it after the meeting.*
- Could more detail be provided as to why the six Lower Super Output Areas mentioned in the report had seen a significant move in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and an explanation of what this meant? *The Head of Neighbourhoods advised that he would provide details to the committee outside of the meeting as he did not have the information with him.*

The Chair suggested that if the Committee thought of any further comments after the meeting they should email the Head of Neighbourhoods with the comments so that he could take note of them for the next draft of the plan.

The Chair requested that the comments made by the Committee were noted and that the draft Peterborough Strategic Development Plan for poverty reduction and social mobility with any amendments come back to the Committee in July for approval.

As it was the start of the new municipal year and there was a new draft Peterborough Strategic Development Plan for poverty reduction and social mobility the Chair proposed that

a new Poverty Champion be elected to take it forward. The Chair also proposed that this be an annual appointment. The Chair asked for nominations. Cllr Shearman was nominated by Cllr Fower and seconded by Cllr Saltmarsh. Cllr Day was nominated by Cllr Harper and seconded by Cllr Peach.

At this point Cllr Shearman who was the current Poverty Champion addressed the Chair to bring to her attention that there was nothing in the Constitution that covered the appointment of the post of Poverty Champion and asked the Senior Governance Officer for clarification as to whether it was a Council appointment. The Senior Governance Officer confirmed that the post of Poverty Champion was not a Council appointment and that it was an appointment of the Committee. The appointment of a Poverty Champion to act on behalf of the committee was made in January 2012 under an agenda item on Child Poverty Action. Cllr Shearman sought clarification as to why there should be a new appointment of a Poverty Champion at the beginning of the new municipal year. The Chair responded that it was because there was now a new draft Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan in place along with a new lead Officer and it was therefore appropriate to offer the appointment to other Members of the Committee and for it to become an annual appointment. After a short discussion Cllr Shearman withdrew his nomination. There being no other nominations Councillor Day therefore accepted the role of Poverty Champion for the Committee for the municipal year 2012-2013.

The Chair proposed that each member of the Committee should champion one of the seven strands within the Poverty Reduction Strategy and that when the Strategy returned to the Committee in July this could be discussed further.

#### **ACTIONS AGREED**

- (i) The Committee requested that a final draft of the Poverty Reduction Strategy come back to the Committee in July for final approval.
- (ii) That a performance dashboard be created for the seven strands to show the Committee how the plan was progressing.
- (iii) The Head of Neighbourhoods to provide the Committee with the number of families and young people in crisis that were being provided with temporary housing.
- (iv) The Head of Neighbourhoods to provide the Committee with details of what was meant by the six Lower Super Output Areas mentioned in the report had seen a 'significant move' in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

#### **7. Children's (Social Care) Services Statutory Complaints Process (Children Act 1989) Annual Report 2011/2012**

The Customer Services Manager introduced the report and explained that the statutory complaints process covered in the report applied to complaints presented by or on behalf of 'children in need' or 'looked after' children as defined by the Children Act 1989. The complaints process aimed to provide additional safeguards for children and young people and to empower them to express their views about services they received. The report provided information on complaint volumes and performance.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- The complaints received are up from last year but there is no comparative data. Could you provide the previous year's data to compare? Do you have any national comparatives or bench marking data from neighbouring authorities? *Members were informed that it was difficult to provide the previous year's data as the reporting process had changed this*

*year and was therefore not comparable. Work was being carried out with complaint managers from the Eastern Region with regard to benchmarking. When the information had been collated it could be shared with the Committee. It may be difficult to compare like with like as some of the other authorities were much larger and had different numbers of children in care.*

- How can officers take confidence in the data and know that there was an improvement if previous year's data to compare or comparative data was not available. *Members were advised that there was data available from the previous year but not in the same format and not as robust as the current data. This could be provided to the Committee.*
- With regard to Table 2 in the report. It states that the average number of days to respond to referral and assessment complaints were 44 when the target was 20 and the average number of days to respond to Children In Need was 30. Had this improved? *The Director of Children's Services informed the committee that the report was reporting on last years performance when the referral and assessment team and family support team were chronically under resourced and struggling to keep on top of their case loads and case work. The improvement plan was tackling this and current data would show a totally different picture to last year.*
- Members noted that there had been an incremental improvement in response rates and wished to acknowledge the Director of Children's Services involvement in making this improvement and the support from officers in turning things around.
- The Head of Customer Services addressed the Commission and also acknowledged the support that had been given to the customer services team from Senior Management in Children's Services.
- Members requested further detail with regard to the classification of 'a child in need'. The Customer Service Manager advised that she would provide this via email to members of the Commission.

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Commission noted the report and agreed that the Customer Service Manager provide the Committee with the following information:

- (i) Last year's data for complaints volumes and performance.
- (ii) Information detailing what the classification was of 'a child in need'.

## **8. Children's Services Improvement Programme – Progress Report**

The Executive Director of Children's Services introduced the report. The report informed the Committee on progress that had been made on the Children's Services Improvement Programme which had been put in place following an Ofsted Inspection in August 2011. The progress report had been a regular report to the committee and the last update to the committee had been in March 2012. Members were advised that significant progress had been made against the core strategy and the 10 key steps which focused on tackling those areas of greatest risk first. Phase Two of the Improvement Programme would focus around seven steps:

- 1) Ensure initial and core assessments are completed on time to an adequate quality and ensure all cases are allocated appropriately
- 2) Focus on raising the quality of casework through
  - i. Implementing the QA framework
  - ii. Monthly audit programme of case work
  - iii. Mock inspection of the contact referral and assessment service
  - iv. Audits of multi-agency practice
  - v. Assurance exercise in long-term teams

- vi. Develop an “inspection ready programme” to prepare for the next full Ofsted inspection
- 3) Put in place a range of preventive services to avoid unnecessary family breakdown
    - i. Put in place an Access to Services Panel
    - ii. Commission high level family support
    - iii. Commission an adolescent intervention service
    - iv. Improve commissioning of all tier two and three services
    - v. Strengthen CAMHS and well-being services for young people
  - 4) Improve care planning and outcomes for Looked after Children (LAC)
    - i. Audit of care plans for all LAC
    - ii. Increase numbers of adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders
    - iii. Improve the supply and choice of adoption and fostering placements
    - iv. Monitoring of minimum standards:
      1. statutory visits
      2. recording for LAC cases
      3. Improving health care assessments for LAC
    - v. Early access to CAMHS provision
    - vi. Monitoring of Personal Education Plan for all LAC
    - vii. Strengthen voice of LAC in policy procedures and decision making
    - viii. Mock inspection of LAC service
  - 5) Strengthen the multi-agency use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the Team around the Child
    - i. Establish Multi-agency Support Panels (MASG)
    - ii. Set up monthly monitoring of uptake and outcomes including use of CAF
    - iii. Strengthen preventive alternatives available at tiers two and three
    - iv. Put in place a review process for all vulnerable children in MASG process
    - v. Review CAF access and allocation processes
  - 6) Put in place a permanent management structure and workforce
    - i. Restructure divisions and appoint new heads of service
    - ii. Recruit permanent social workers
    - iii. Recruit permanent Director of Children’s Services
  - 7) Improve the impact of partnerships
    - i. Strengthen monitoring and scrutiny role of Peterborough Safeguarding Children’s Board
    - ii. Develop a Joint Commissioning Group to replace the Children’s Trust
    - iii. Set up a Joint Commissioning Unit with the PCT and Clinical Commissioning Group

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- How many permanent social workers do you have in place and how many were temporary. *The Director of Children’s Services advised that he did not have the exact figures with him but could provide the information later. There were approximately two real vacancies but about 20 to 22 agency staff within the compliment of 81 social workers. It was a high number of agency staff but they were required at this moment in time as they were of a high quality and had been with the department for some time. Ideally the aim was to have a full compliment of permanent staff who were going to make a career in Peterborough in place as soon as possible.*

- Are you going to take any of the agency staff on as permanent employees? *Members were informed that all of the agency staff had been written to and had been encouraged to consider applying for a permanent role.*
- Was there any correlation between families needing social care and those in poverty? *Members were advised that many families that live in poverty do not need a social care service but poverty could make a family vulnerable. There may be a correlation but there was no statistical evidence to show this.*
- What could be done to attract and keep social workers in Peterborough? *Members were advised that the elements that would attract and retain staff were:*
  - *Development, training and career opportunities*
  - *Reasonable workload*
  - *Managers that supported and advised their team**This would provide a long and sustainable workforce. Training was being provided for new social workers and there were currently four going through the training programme and this could possibly extend to eight. There was a need to have a balance of newly qualified social workers and established social workers.*
- Were the salaries offered to social workers in Peterborough comparable to other authorities? *Members were advised that Peterborough offered a competitive rate of pay.*
- The Chair commented that the Task and Finish Group had started a series of visits to the department and were continuing to monitor the ten core tasks.

Members wished to pass on their thanks to all the social workers for their commitment and all the work that they had done over this difficult time.

#### **ACTIONS AGREED**

- (i) The Committee noted the Safeguarding Improvement Plan and the progress that had been made.
- (ii) The Director of Children's Services to provide the Committee with the number of permanent social workers and temporary social workers currently in employed.

#### **9. Review of 2011/12 and Work Programme for 2012/13**

The report provided the Committee with:

- a review of work undertaken during 2011/12 and recommendations made
- the terms of reference for the Committee and
- a draft work programme for 2012/2013 for consideration

After consideration of the items within the report the Members of the Committee requested that in addition to items already on the work programme the following items should be considered:

- School development programme
- Looked after Children
- Children with disabilities and services provided for them

#### **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee agreed that the Senior Governance Officer work with the Chair and Group Representatives to manage the work programme of the Committee and programme in requested items.

## **10. Forward Plan of key Decisions**

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan, 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 Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

### **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the Forward Plan and requested clarification on the Award of a Framework for Temporary Staff for Children's Services – KEY/04MAR/12. The Director of Children's Services provided clarification to Members.

## **11. Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 23 July 2012

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.25

CHAIRMAN

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