

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD IN THE  
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH  
ON 22 JULY 2013**

**Present:** Councillors S Day (Chairman), C Harper, B Rush, B Saltmarsh, J Shearman,

**Also present** Alastair Kingsley Co-opted Member  
Alex Hall Youth Representative  
Aidan Thompson Youth Representative  
Councillor Holdich Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University

**Officers in Attendance:** Sue Westcott Executive Director, Children's Services  
Debbie Haith Assistant Director Safeguarding Families & Communities  
Jonathan Lewis Assistant Director, Education and Resources  
Wendi Ogle-Welbourn Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning, Prevention  
Denham Hughes Team Leader, NEET, 0-19 years  
Adrian Chapman Head of Neighbourhood Services  
Ray Hooke Performance and Information Officer  
Paulina Ford Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny  
Catherine Berriman Lawyer

**1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fower.

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

There were no declarations of Interest or whipping declarations.

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

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

**4. Corporate Parenting Annual Report**

The Assistant Director, Safeguarding Families and Communities introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) over the last year. It was highlighted that this panel played a crucial role in safeguarding and improving life chances for children. The report demonstrated how effective corporate parenting was in working towards improving how children were looked after. This was the first Annual Report and future reports would be presented on an annual basis.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members noted that the report mentioned benefits delivered through a new local 'scorecard' and asked what the 'scorecard' was as it had not been included in the report. *Members were informed that the 'scorecard' tracked data that had to be produced for the Department of Education around performance for Looked After Children. The 'scorecard'*

*covered the number of Looked After Children, where they were placed; how far away they were placed from Peterborough; the number of children placed in foster care; those placed in residential care and schools; their health assessments. The 'scorecard' was currently very much about 'hard data'. The CPP were trying to look more at the child's experience and include qualitative data that demonstrated how well the children were cared for. The 'scorecard' was presented at every CPP meeting.*

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Committee noted the report.

### **5. Tackling Poverty Strategy and Action Plan**

The Head of Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the work being undertaken to develop a strategy and action plan for tackling poverty in Peterborough. The Performance and Information Officer from the Neighbourhoods team was introduced to the Committee as he had helped in providing the data in the report. The report had been presented twice previously to the Committee, and was work-in-progress. The Committee were asked to review the Strategy and Action Plan and provide feedback. The Committee was also asked to endorse the continuation of the working group; as well as the expansion of the group. Members were advised of the proposal for the Communities and Cohesion Board to take on the responsibility for overseeing and directing the work to tackle poverty. Members were informed that there was already a lot of work taking place to tackle poverty.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members expressed concern that the amount of data that was being added to justify the strands that were within the report was creating an impossible model to maintain.
- Members noted that there were inaccuracies within the report such as the statement that the amount of job seekers claiming allowance was still rising; while it was known that the amount has gone down since December.
- Members raised concern over the GDHI income per head figures; which was presented over 12 years rather than a more recent trend of 6 years. *Members were advised that the initial scope for the report was to look at all data available to be able to provide a full insight. Officers felt that the GDHI measure should be used but agreed that there should be stricter criteria in place.*
- Members asked when the report would be finalised. *Members were advised that it needed to be signed off and adopted by the Local Authority as soon as possible. If the Committee were comfortable with the report presented officers would work on it over the summer months and bring it back for review in September.*
- Members suggested that the NEET report could feed into the Poverty Strategy as there seemed to be a direct link between examination results and poverty existing within the city. Could evidence be found that correlates poverty with educational outcomes? *Members were advised that this task had already been included on the work programme. Some of the data from the NEET report had been included in the report and some work had already been done regarding the correlation between educational outcomes and poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation had a good understanding on this relationship and suggested three different levels of support for families who were vulnerable to lower education. Officers suggested that the following be included in the action plan going forward: a micro-level approach (actions dealing with individuals); a macro-level (social structures in place to support families); and an intermediate support level (the context in which families, schools and peer groups operate and support one another).*
- Members asked who would set the targets referred to on page 15 of the report. *Members were informed that work was being done with the Financial Inclusion Forum, which was a group of Council officers and partners to bring forward recommendations on the targets. Figures would be included in the September report.*

- Members asked if the data in the report could have more continuity and consistency. *Members were advised that a lot of data available was at a national level but not at a local authority level. The available data at local authority level was much older. This was the reason more historic timescales were relied on in some of the instances. The data provided in the report was the most recent available data. Members were advised of a report produced by the Child Poverty Action group which quoted that Peterborough had 11090 children and young people living in poverty. The figures quoted in the report were therefore current. It was also highlighted that a monetary value of the estimated cost to society of poverty in Peterborough was also included in the Child Poverty Action Group's report which was £120 million.*
- Members referred to the chart within the report showing "vacancies by occupation" across the city. There seemed to be a big mix of occupations available for a broad set of skills? *Members were advised that the chart was included to show the changing picture over quarterly periods. It was noted that a lay person looking at this chart would see that it would depend on when the person was looking for the job in a particular field as to availability. The Department of Work and Pensions had informed the officers that the breadth and availability of jobs was greater than ever before in the city.*
- Members asked how one defined that someone is in poverty. *Members were informed that there were four measures used to define poverty. The simplest measure was the national measure, which was that anyone falling below 60% of median income was considered to be in poverty. This was a very basic measurement and did not take into account a lot of factors that would need to be considered. Another measurement included looking at the household income plus material deprivation (cost of living, wealth, ownership vs. household income). A third measurement looked at absolute low income (the poorest families were measured against a rise in income in real terms across the country) and lastly a measurement looking at persistence (how long a household had been in poverty).*
- Members asked how an individual would be referred to the city food bank and how many times that person would be allowed to use the facility. *Members were advised that an individual could be referred three times in any twelve month period. In Peterborough referrals were linked to a package of support. A food bank voucher on its own could be issued from any number of agencies and would come with other support such as long term debt advice; help with priorities of financing; etc.*
- Members asked if the Basic Needs Service being filtered through the CAB was successful and how quickly they could respond to individuals who suddenly found themselves in poverty. *Members were advised that the triage aspect for all packages of support was provided by CAB and by a network of different providers. It was confirmed that referrals were made into services immediately including the Basic Needs Service, but it was also available from the Credit Union and Carezone. The availability and accessibility of the service would continue to grow and Basic Needs provision would soon have seven day coverage. The CAB alone could not cope with the demands of Basic Needs referrals and had previously had to turn away up to forty people a day. In order to resolve this, an additional investment of £350,000 from the National Lottery was secured to build capacity and recruit more staff and to look at how service delivery could be made more efficient. The Council had also provided funding to CAB which would also help build that capacity. The capacity should be in place to fully cope with the demand by late summer.*
- Members asked if there were any facilities to provide for those individuals out in the rural areas. *Members were informed that currently there were no rural outlets for the food bank. There were two important pieces of work going on at the moment in relation to this as it had also been highlighted at a Rural Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities had requested that a plan be developed around rural poverty issues. The first piece of work which would be included in the second phase of the Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme included a programme of up-skilling for community based groups and organisations; both urban and rural. This would help those individuals who would not wish to go into the City Centre to get the advice or provisions they needed and would prefer to go to their local resident's association Chairperson or Parish Councillor for example. Part of the funding made available to CAB included training for Parish Councils and Community Groups. This would start to roll out in early autumn. If*

*there were any individuals in the rural areas with specific needs they could be visited in their homes or have the provisions delivered directly to them. This was part of the programme that was available now.*

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Committee requested that the Head of Neighbourhood Services take the following actions with regard to the Tackling Poverty Strategy and Action Plan:

- Look at the criteria for the data presented; particularly with regard to trend measurements.
- Include evidence regarding the correlation between educational outcomes and poverty in the future reports.
- Include information on how schools were spending the funds made available by government to support pupils on free school meals.
- Include targets in the next document for review at the meeting in September.
- Include data from the DWP with regards to job vacancies in future reports and invite a representative from the Job Centre, to substantiate the evidence to the Committee.
- Re-circulate the PCAS guidance leaflet
- Investigate using mobile libraries to use as food banks in rural areas.
- Include more ward specific data in the report e.g. children in poverty per ward and employment data per ward.

The Committee noted the report and the draft Tackling Poverty Strategy and Action Plan and agreed to extend the working group.

## **6. NEET (16-19 years not in Education, Employment and Training) Update**

The purpose of the report was to inform the Committee of the current position in the city regarding young people who are not in Education, Employment and Training. The report highlighted the work of the NEET team and the actions taken to reduce the number of NEET people in the city. It was noted that young people classed as NEET had poorer life chances and that the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to identify these people. It was highlighted that the June figure for NEET's was 7.58% and this downward trajectory continued. There had been a large focus on Looked After Children and it was now known that there were 85.71% of Looked After Children who were in some form of education which was great progress for the NEET team.

The team manager for the NEET team was introduced to the Committee, who explained what each 'Employability Programme' involved. This included information on the Prince's Trust Team programme and programmes that were in partnership with Cross Keys Homes. There was also a weekly Work Club which was run out of the central library youth access point. The Pre-ESOL programme addressed a particular area of concern regarding a number of young people with English language difficulties. This programme aimed to assist those young people whose language was not sufficient to start on the ESOL programme. It was noted that a number of those attending this course were previously unknown to the NEET team. The outreach performed by the NEET team had helped to identify these young people.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members congratulated Cross Key Homes on the work they were doing for NEETs.
- Members asked if there was a limit as to how many young people could take part in the Prince's Trust programme. *Members were informed there was a limit of 19 young people per course.*
- Members asked if the 0-19 youth workers were the ones finding young people who attended the Pre-ESOL course. *Members were informed that one of the advisors to NEET,*

*who worked with a youth worker who had good relationships with local Eastern European Groups in the area had helped recruit young people with limited language skills.*

- *Members asked what the quality of employment was like for NEET's and was their progress monitored to ensure they were not dismissed. Members were reminded that the young people they got into employment were those that had not achieved well in education or to high academic levels. Moving the young people into work was only part of the team's goals. A lot of time was spent getting them into college so that they could further themselves and give themselves opportunities for high level work placements. The work placements the NEET team obtained were the best possible appropriate placements for the young people. Placements were monitored and there was a team of trackers who contacted the young people on a three monthly basis until their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday to find out what their situation was. If they were no longer in work they were offered support through the employment services team. Members were informed that the NEET team did not gather data regarding pay levels once their young people were placed.*
- *Members asked if there were other employers in the city like Cross Keys who were working with the NEET team. Members were informed that there were no partners as large as Cross Keys. Extensive work was being carried out with BGL Insurance and there were strong historical links with Perkins although their intake of young people into apprenticeships has been reduced over recent years but it was starting to increase again. The team had an employment advisor who provided employer links to the team and contacted local businesses to find opportunities.*
- *Will the Raising of Participation Age have any budgetary implications for the Council for the anticipated increase that will take place in 2015 and is central government making additional funds available? Members were advised that there were no central funds available and the work would have to be done alongside the current NEET work. It would be a challenge and could not be left only to the NEET team within the Local Authority. It would require working very closely with schools and employers to make them aware of what was needed.*
- *Members commented that there had been a big change in terms of awareness and opportunities for apprenticeships.*
- *Members asked if the Local Authority offered any employment opportunities to NEET's. Members were informed that the NEET team had been working with Enterprise recently and had developed a plan to include a rolling program of work placement opportunities for young people in various areas of work that Enterprise offered. Members were further advised that Serco provided apprenticeships to young people and that Children's Services has looked at making filing jobs available as pre-administrative roles.*
- *Members suggested looking at bringing young people in to the Local Authority for 'taster sessions' as part of work experience during school holidays.*

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Committee noted the report and requested that the NEET Team Leader take the following actions:

- Look into finding a way of measuring pay levels and ensuring that young people were paid at least minimum wages.
- Look into the Chair's suggestion of bringing young people in for taster sessions during school holidays.

The Committee requested that a further report be provided in one year.

## **7. Peterborough School Improvement Strategy**

The Assistant Director, Education and Resources introduced the report which provided the Committee with the latest version of the School Improvement Strategy, which outlined the proposed approach the authority would take in targeting schools. The Strategy had been prepared to ensure schools understood what the Local Authority could offer to them and to create accountability for both the Local Authority and schools and to ensure schools were fully

aware of how they were performing. The intention was to send the reports out to all schools in September alongside the relevant data sheets.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented that it appeared to be a good strategy and it was hoped that with these measures in place improvements would continue.
- Members commented on the focus on lower achieving schools and highlighted the importance of ensuring there was oversight and management of this; and ensuring the skills for monitoring was retained within the Local Authority to ensure the focus remained.
- Members noted the separation within the report in terms of management oversight and school-to-school support systems. Members highlighted the pace of dependency on school-to-school partnership and challenged officers to ensure there was a gradual transition where appropriate rather than pushing too fast and losing the core Local Authority supervision that would still be needed. *Members were informed that the principles of monitoring, support, intervention and challenge would have to be written throughout the school-to-school partnership. Members were updated in terms of the pace of change. A conference was held in June with Head Teachers and there had been a subsequent working group meeting with Head Teachers where positive steps had been made to implement driving school-to-school support. The intention was that this work would continue in early autumn and a further report would be brought to Scrutiny in November.*
- Members sought clarification on the OfSTED categories. *Members were given clarification as to the OfSTED categories and how these were used to measure a school's performance. Standards in terms of achievements were the priority and there was an important link between standards of attainment and rates of progress. Therefore even schools with low standards could still be outstanding.*
- Members commented that it was important to look in terms of year on year incremental progress. It had been stated before that the progress of children between Key Stage 1 and 2 had been of high standards; but from Key Stage 2 to 4 it was not satisfactory. Was this still the case? *Members were advised that the results would not be published until August; although there had been a clear focus in secondary schools around progress measures. One of the problems that secondary schools had was that measures in terms of progress did not get published while Key Stage 4 results were published. However, progress predictions indicated that there would be an improvement this year.*
- Members asked officers if they could elaborate on the following phrase in the report: "We will use our democratic mandate to champion the interests of parents and children" and its seeming contradiction with an earlier statement made: "...to the end our work will be relationships between schools, based on mutual respect, understanding and transparency..." *Championing the interests of parents and children would sometimes require being tough on schools; how would this be achieved? Members were informed that there were powers of intervention that could be used. Forewarnings would be issued and additional Governors could be appointed. Measures would be taken to deal with any underperformers, from Governors to Support Staff. Mediocrity from schools would not be accepted, Members were advised that since 2007 the relationship with Head Teachers and Governance had transformed to a point where the mutual respect and transparency allowed the School Improvement Team to challenge schools which would not have been previously possible. It was further noted that schools were encouraged to support each other in these times of different educational landscapes. This was part of the school-to-school partnership progress which would need to become a reality in the future as the Local Authority could not continue to offer all the support.*

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Committee noted the Peterborough School Improvement Strategy report.

## 8. Peterborough EAL Strategy

The Assistant Director, Education and Resources introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the Peterborough EAL Strategy to improve the attainments of pupils with English as an additional language and to outline the actions that are proposed to take place. It was highlighted that a key part of this strategy was to provide a sustainable solution so that schools could continue to support and provide as necessary for the EAL children in the future. This involved up-skilling the teachers and giving them strategies to work with this group of children to ensure they were quickly and smoothly integrated into the education system.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members welcomed the strategy and commented that it had been needed for a long time.
- Members asked if there was enough traction being made on the items identified in paragraph 5.3 of the report, relating to an implementation plan; particularly the time-critical items. *Members were advised that a lot of this work had already been done. It was noted that the team has been given more resources to run the programme. It would however take time to impact on outcomes. Members were also advised that there had been huge interest in the courses offered; although not as much from secondary schools and therefore the team would focus on engaging with them in the future.*
- Members asked if the training and resource that had already been provided to Local Authority Governors could be delivered to all Governors. *Members were advised that this strategy would be launched with Governors in the autumn. The intention was to use hubs to get the training delivered to as many schools as possible, as well as to ensure all Governors were given an EAL handbook. The first stage of the strategy involved marketing and making sure information was available so that everyone knew how to access the services.*
- Members asked when the reference group of school leaders and key partners was going to be established. *Members were informed that the reference group was due to be set up in September. The EAL team were already in communications with a number of schools and eight head teachers had signed up to join the group.*
- Members asked what sort of interest school Governors had shown in the training offered and if there was a record of which schools were poorly represented? *Members were advised that there was a Governor Forum held every half term, where training was offered to all Governors. Approximately 85 people attended the last session. The intention was that a copy of the EAL strategy would be sent to every school alongside the School Improvement strategy. As part of the governance support service, the team would offer a dedicated training session for Governors. Each of the schools that subscribed were allowed a dedicated training session in school.*
- Members asked if there were any links made with other Local Authorities regarding school-to-school partnerships; and to what extent was this work being pushed on by the work Graham Smith was undertaking in the city. *Members were informed that this piece of work came from learning from others and they were looking at connecting with other Local Authorities. Graham Smith was formerly the 'London Challenge' advisor for EAL and had supported the team to put together the strategy in the report presented. A lot of academic research had also gone into the report as well as work with other schools in other Local Authorities. There was a particular link with schools in Bradford. The challenge was finding other Local Authorities who had similar challenges to Peterborough and Nottingham City was the closest match. There had also been communications with Bristol who also had similar challenges.*
- Members asked whether Graham Smith was working for the Local Authority on a consultancy basis. *Members were advised that he had been commissioned by the LA to undertake this piece of work.*

## ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the EAL strategy report

### 9. 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 June 2013. Members were advised that performance in general was being sustained. Going forward Children's Services would need to reconfigure the staff structure in order to accommodate work load without taking on any new staff. It was noted that there would be a focus on Family Support Services and Direct Intervention services in future.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented that a resident recently reported a concern about children living next door to their home. The Councillor reported this to Children's Services on a Monday and received a full report by Friday. Members were impressed by this efficient service and thanked the department for this good work.
- Members asked if Children's Services were looking to reduce the number of social workers. *Members were advised that it had been agreed that when the additional social workers were given to the department it would be reviewed after a year and again after eighteen months to see if the same capacity would still be required. The previous Executive Director of Children's Services, Malcolm Newsam had advised that an additional 21 social workers were needed in order to improve the service. It was the department's view that this capacity was still required and this had been reported to the Corporate Management Team but the department was still obliged to review it.*
- Members sought assurance that there would not be a reduction in the additional funding that had been allocated to Children's Services. *Members were advised that the team was obliged to review what provision was available to the service; whether it was necessary based on the number of referrals and work they were conducting. It was confirmed that at this point in time there was no reason to withdraw the additional social workers or funding.*
- Members asked if the report could be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee after the review to show how the social workers were being employed and whether they had been moved to different departments. *Members were advised that social workers would not be moved. The review would cover the entire provision across Children's Services and would look at whether their workers were in the right place across all the services within the department. An example was given: Some changes had been made to the Front Door so that there were more workers available to screen the initial contacts and referrals so the work was done early on rather than down the line. In order to facilitate this, some staff members had been moved from 'Referral and Assessment' teams to 'Family Support' teams. It was noted that this would always happen in social care as they continue to improve they would be required to look at provision on a constant basis.*
- Members asked where they should expect to see the baselines levelled out in the future now that the improvement was generally positive and sustaining. *Members were informed that there was always a focus on quantitative information in an improvement plan. This was the reason for the focus on timescales in the report. Now that this had improved the focus would shift to the quality of work. Members were informed that during the last inspection OfSTED had not asked about timescales. The department was developing a single assessment tool to take away the distinction between initial and core assessments so that the process would be as follows: a referral would be allocated (if it met the threshold of social care); there would be one single assessment. This would mean fewer transitions from one team to another thereby allowing for continuity of one social worker which was better for both the child and family and the social worker.*



- Members commented that the report indicated that there were still a few changes going on in terms of the way the system was adapting and that it still included data that was very qualitative based. This seemed to indicate a disconnect between the focus of OfSTED and Children's Services and the focus in the report presented to the Committee. *Members were advised that the Department for Education was still measuring Children's Services on the indicators and this was the reason they were reflected in the report.*

#### **AGREED ACTION**

The Committee noted the report and requested that the Executive Director for Children's Services reframe the report to include qualitative aspects of the improvement work and present this at the next meeting in September.

### **10. Scrutiny in a Day: A Focus on Welfare Reform**

The Senior Governance Officer presented the report which set out proposals to hold a cross-Scrutiny Committee event that would focus on the impacts of welfare reform. This event would be held in order to understand and mitigate against the breadth of impact on individuals, families, communities and businesses. Nominations would be sought from each Scrutiny Committee to form a working party to help plan and provide input for the day.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked if there were any proposed dates for the event. *Members were advised that no date had been set but it would probably be held during late autumn time.*
- Alistair Kingsley and Councillor Sue Day volunteered to be part of the working party to assist in organising the event.
- Members agreed that the Scrutiny in a Day event to focus on Welfare Reform was necessary and welcomed the proposal.

#### **AGREED ACTION**

The Committee noted the report and agreed to be part of the Cross Scrutiny Committee event.

### **11. Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions**

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

#### **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions and requested the following information:

- Information on the process for choosing a new provider for Claire Lodge to be sent to the Committee.
- Senior Governance Officer to find out why KEY/13NOV12/09 Children's Play Services was still on the list and if it can be removed.
- Senior Governance Officer to find out why KEY/25JUL13/02 The Expansion of Fulbridge Academy was still on the list as this has been completed.

## **12. Work Programme**

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2013/14 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

### **ACTION AGREED**

To confirm the work programme for 2013/14 and the Senior Governance Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.

## **13. Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 9 September 2013

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.26pm

CHAIRMAN