

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON MONDAY 9 MARCH 2015**

Present: Councillors S Day (Chairman), C Harper, G Nawaz, B Saltmarsh, J Shearman, R Ferris, D Fower

Also present Alistair Kingsley Independent Co-optee
Miranda Robinson Education Co-optee
Louise Ravenscroft Representing Family Voice

Officers in Attendance: Sue Westcott Executive Director for Children's Services
Jonathan Lewis Service Director for Education, Resources and Corporate Property
Nick Beech Senior School Improvement Advisor
Lesley Kelly Senior School Improvement Advisor
Belinda Evans Complaints Manager

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rush and Councillor Jamil. Councillor Ferris and Councillor Harper were in attendance as substitutes. Apologies for absence were also received from Education Co-opted Member Stewart Francis.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

3. Minutes of meetings held on 5 January 2015

The minutes of the meetings held on 5 January 2015 were agreed 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. Childrens Social Care Complaints Supplementary Report

The report was introduced by the Complaints Manager and provided the Committee with supplementary information in response to questions on the Annual Complaints Report which had been presented to the Committee at its meeting on 8 September 2014.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members were concerned that a high number of complaints were for Staff Attitude/Conduct. *The Director of Childrens Services advised that a list of staff members who were under the category of Staff Attitude/Conduct complaints had been provided to the Director. The matter of the complaint had then been addressed with the staff during their supervision session. A number of the complaints had been about the churn in social workers. There was a mix of complaints against both agency staff and permanent staff.*

- Members sought clarification regarding complaints upheld due to lack of communication. *Members were informed that this referred to one particular complaint which had related to lack of follow up on phone calls, not having the process explained to them and not receiving a quick enough response.*
- Is the delayed and failed service due to the Social Workers having to undertake more back office administrative duties? *Members were informed that the delays were not about lack of adequate business support for Social Workers but ongoing pressures of the job. Any delays or failed service was however unacceptable.*
- Members referred to page 12, and sought clarification on the following statement “Where the problem is not isolated to certain individuals the service need to consider how they can engage more effectively with their client group to minimise distrust and uncertainty”. *Members were informed that one of the issues with delivering social care was that the service being delivered was usually a service that families may not want. The key to effective social work was the establishment of good relationships which can sometimes be difficult.*
- Did the service have a target standard to aim for in responding to complaints? *Members were informed that regulations stated 10 working days but in some circumstances it would be 20 working days.*

The Chair thanked the Complaints Manager for the informative report.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Committee noted the report and requested that future reports should contain historical data for comparison.
2. A further annual report to be provided in September 2015.

6. Report on the Work of the Corporate Parenting Panel

The report was introduced by Councillor Saltmarsh, Vice Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel which provided the Committee with an update on the work undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Panel between January 2014 and December 2014. Councillor Saltmarsh paid tribute to the Director of Childrens Services, Sue Westcott for raising the profile of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members felt that the Corporate Parenting Panel should find some way of measuring the impact that the Corporate Parenting Panel had made on the outcomes of Looked After Children.
- Members referred to page 16, paragraph 5.3 and the mention of the “*challenges presented by an ever increasingly diverse demographic*”. *The Director informed Members that it was an ever increasing complex area of work. There was an interpreting service but they were not always available. The service was therefore trying to bring interpreters to work within the service to provide a diverse social worker workforce to reflect the community. Recruitment adverts clearly stated that the council welcomed applicants from diverse communities.*
- Are you employing social workers from Eastern Europe? *Members were informed that this was not being pursued as there were issues with their registration.*
- Members referred to the Terms of Reference, Functions of the Panel and asked if the function “*To appoint elected members as Champions for Children in Care in respect of the following strands*” was working. *Cllr Saltmarsh advised that this was being reviewed with the idea that Cabinet Members might become the Champions of the relevant area that fell within their portfolio e.g. the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University would be the Champion for Education Attainment and access to Higher Education strand.*

- Members were advised that there was a core group of 14 to 15 Members that attended each Corporate Parenting Panel meeting. The meeting was not a public meeting and therefore attendance could not be recorded.
- The Director stated that there had been a great improvement in the Corporate Parenting Panel since a core membership had been in place and suggested that after the elections a training day is held to raise the profile of the Corporate Parenting Panel and responsibilities of councillors as corporate parents.
- The Director also stated that it was important for the Corporate Parenting Panel to provide evidence of what difference the Panel was making to the lives of Looked After Children.

The Chair thanked Councillor Saltmarsh for all the work she had done in regard to the development of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Director of Childrens Services for raising the profile of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested a further report at a future meeting in the next municipal year. The report to include evidence of what difference the Corporate Parenting Panel had made to the lives of Looked After Children in the city and if possible to include some targets by which this could be measured.

7. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Reforms Update

The Service Director for Education, Resources and Corporate Property introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on progress made towards implementing the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms in Peterborough. Louise Ravenscroft was also in attendance representing Family Voice.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members wanted to know what was being done with regard to improving accessibility. *Members were informed that there was still work being done to improve accessibility and it was hoped that a pilot would take place with a group of parents to trial access to the local offer. The aim was to go live in March.*
- Are people going to be supported and monitored with regard to using their personal budget? *Members were advised that there were safeguarding's and support around the use of personal budgets and they would be reviewed annually to check that the personal budget was being spent as it should be. The personal budget had to be used to meet the outcomes in the Personal Plan.*
- How ridged is the allocated amount of the personal budget. If a person required additional money could they apply for it? *Members were informed that the budget was a personalised amount to meet the individual's needs. There was flexibility to accommodate an individual's needs which would be identified when reviewed.*
- Was there a cap on the budget allocated? *Members were informed that there was three chunks of money. There was £4000 in each school for a child for their needs, an additional amount of £6000 if a child had additional needs and a top up budget which was held by the Local Authority and this was allocated in respect of each child's needs. There was no top limit and the money was there to meet the child's needs.*
- Members asked for further information on the SEND-specific engagement strategy. *Members were advised that this was still being developed and the Brighton and Hove Charter was being used as a starting point. The strategy could be brought back to the Committee at a future meeting.*
- What is the biggest change that schools will have to address? *Members were informed that the biggest change would be that schools would have to investment more time in the process as it was more detailed.*

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director for an informative report and thanked Louise Ravenscroft for all her work done in representing Family Voice.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested that the Corporate Director bring a further update report back to the Committee in the next municipal year and include the SEND-specific engagement strategy.

8. Presentation of 2014 Unvalidated Examination Results

The Service Director for Education, Resources and Corporate Property introduced the report which provided the Committee with a summary of the 2014 unvalidated assessment and examination results for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS – Reception Year – YR), Year 1 Phonics Check, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. It was noted that the results were provisional and were liable to change when the validated results were published.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members referred to Year 1 Phonics and noted that whilst the results had improved by 6% from 2013 there was still a gap to national average of -8% and was 11% below the statistical neighbour average. Why was this? *Members were advised that the proportion of pupils with EAL was very different to other statistical neighbours. Peterborough did not compare like with like at national or statistical neighbours. There were also some elements of poor teaching in particular year groups and particular schools. No other authority was like Peterborough however a great deal of work was being done in Early Years and the gap was closing. A lot of work was being done around phonics including engaging with parents and teaching them phonics.*
- The Service Director explained the change in recording schools exam results and that only a student's first attempt at a GCSE examination would count towards their schools standing in the performance tables. There had been a great improvement in the English results but there had been challenges around the maths results which had been lower than expected. There had been a particular issue across the different Exam Boards used for maths with regards to grade boundaries. Maths was now a focus in Key Stage 4.
- Members noted that there had been good results at Key Stage 1 but disappointing results at Key Stage 2. *Members were informed that some of the predictions from a few of the schools had not been achieved as expected which affected the overall results. The good results being produced at Key Stage 1 would take a while to filter through to Key Stage 2.*
- What percentage of schools were accurate in their predictions. *Members were informed that approximately 90% of schools were accurate. Sometimes predictions changed because of cohort changes.*
- Members referred to Early Years Foundation Stage. Do you work closely with the Private Voluntary Independent Providers (PVI) to ensure uniformity across the city? *Members were informed that PVI settings were subject to Ofsted. Peterborough was above the national average for the quality of PVI settings that are good or better.*
- If a PVI wants to expand would the Local Authority give their views to the Planning Committee? *Members were informed that the Local Authority role was to make sure there was sufficient provision and would therefore support settings in planning applications where provision was needed.*
- How can you ensure consistency with internal assessment at Key Stage 1? *Members were advised that reading and maths were externally assessed. Writing was subject to internal assessment so more likely to vary in assessment however the school improvement team had a rolling programme of moderation in place to ensure a level of consistency. Schools were also encouraged to share best practice and moderate with each other.*

- Members commented that there was still a big disconnect with progress levels of primary schools compared to secondary schools. *Members were advised that the School Improvement Board was looking at the lack of consistency of progress from primary to secondary schools and also the transition from primary school to secondary school.*
- Members were pleased to note that 80.7 % of children were now attending schools judged good or better. Would this be difficult to improve on next year? *Members were informed that the aim was to reach 85% this year.*

ACTION

The Committee noted the report.

9. Impact of Universal Free School Meals on Pupil Premium

The Service Director for Education, Resources and Corporate Property introduced the report which provided the Committee with an early view of the potential impact that the introduction of the universal free school meals for infant school children is having on the identification and funding of pupils for pupil premium. The Service Director tabled an updated chart under section 5.3 of the report providing information on Universal Infant FSM Numbers in Maintained Schools. Key issues highlighted:

- The number of children in infant schools signing up for Free School Meals had dropped.
- New Children coming into reception were not claiming Free School Meals due to the fact that they were already receiving a free school meal and therefore did not need to sign up to Free School Meals which would entitle them to Pupil Premium. This meant that a significant amount of money had been lost. Schools had been notified of this and various initiatives had been put in place to try and encourage people to sign up for Free School Meals.
- It was a national problem.
- Two authorities were using their council tax data to claim free school meals. This would be looked into further to see if this could be done in Peterborough.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Is the issue that people do not wish to give their national insurance number to the school? *Members were informed that this was difficult to know but it could be one of the issues.*
- Members were concerned at the lack of sign up to Free School Meals and wanted to know how it had been advertised. *Members were informed that it had been advertised through television adverts, radio, newspapers, Facebook, twitter. Schools were promoting it at parents meetings and offering incentives.*
- Members suggested putting the information on the Council Tax Form.
- Members suggested emailing every councillor with the information and putting a video on YouTube.

ACTION

The Committee noted the report and requested that the Service Director email all councillors with information on how to claim Free School Meals.

10. Directors Report for Social Care Practice and Performance

The Executive Director of Children's Services introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the progress of performance and practice in Children's Social Care as of 31 January 2015.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members were concerned that there was no analysis between permanent and agency staff in the report and that Agency Social Workers made up 24.6% of the staff. *Members were informed that since the report was written Agency Social Workers had risen to 27%. A number of permanent staff had left and at the exit interviews it was identified that people were leaving for personal reasons or because they could earn more through being an agency social worker.*
- The Executive Director informed Members that a lot of work was being done around recruitment and another major campaign was being planned. Peterborough had also just been awarded the DfE Step Up To Social Work Programme. Step Up to Social Work was a programme which enabled trainees to work towards a qualification to practice as a social worker at the same time as gaining intensive hands-on experience. This should attract high-achieving graduates or career changers.
- There were currently 22 applications received for newly qualified social workers of which approximately 4 or 5 would eventually be employed.
- Is Liquid Logic embedded and working well? *Members were informed that it was working well but there was still further development on the system to be done.*
- Members noted the agreement which had been reached regionally in regard to the capping of Agency Worker pay rates. It was also noted that it was an agreement in principle and requested a report back to the Committee in six months' time to see what effect it had had.

Councillor Shearman had to leave the meeting and wished to note his thanks to the following people:

- Councillor Day for all the work she had done as the Chair of the Committee.
- Sue Westcott, Executive Director for Childrens Services and Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Childrens Services (not present at the meeting) for the improvements that had been made since the Ofsted report.
- Paulina Ford, Senior Democratic Services Officer for supporting the Committee over the past year.

The Chair noted that the person taking over the responsibility of Childrens Services when Sue Westcott left would be Wendi Ogle-Welbourn and requested that the Directors Report for Social Care Practice and Performance continue to be reported at each meeting.

The Executive Director suggested that the Members of the Committee continue with the scheduled visits to the Childrens Services Department as this was an important part of understanding and monitoring the work of the service area.

The Chair informed Members that she would not be standing for election next year and wished to noted her thanks to the following people:

- The Executive Director of Childrens Services, Sue Westcott for all the work she had done in supporting the Committee and all the work done in developing the Improvement Plan in response to the findings and recommendations of the Ofsted safeguarding inspection carried out in August 2011.
- Alistair Kingsley, Independent Co-Opted Member for his valuable input at each meeting.
- Paulina Ford, Senior Democratic Services Officer for all her work in supporting the Committee.
- The Chair also wished to thank Paulina Ford, the Democratic Services Team and Adrian Chapman's Team for all the work done by them in organising the successful Scrutiny in a Day Event in January 2014 and the follow up event in February 2015 which focused on the Impact of Welfare Reform.

ACTION

1. The Committee noted the report.
2. The Committee also requested that:
 - a) The Directors Report for Social Care Practice and Performance continue to be reported at each meeting.
 - b) That Members of the Committee re-establish regular visits to the Childrens Services department to monitor safeguarding. This to be set up by the Service Director Children's Services and Safeguarding.
 - c) A report on recruitment and retention of Social Workers to be brought back to the Committee in six months' time.

11. Forward Plan of Executive Decisions

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

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.15pm

CHAIRMAN

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