

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT 7.00PM ON  
THURSDAY, 15 JULY 2021  
VENUE: SAND MARTIN HOUSE, PETERBOROUGH**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors G Casey (Vice Chair), I Ali, A Dowson, C Fenner, (Vice Chair), T Haynes, I Hussain, N Moyo, L Robinson, B Rush, H Skibsted

Co-opted Members: Flavio Vettese, Darren Ayling, Sameena Aziz, Al Kingsley, Mohammed Younis and Parish Councillor June Bull

**Officers Present:** Lou Williams, Service Director, Children's Services  
Toni Bailey, Assistant Director (SEND & Inclusion)  
Jonathan Lewis – Service Director (Education)  
Paulina Ford, Senior Democratic Services Officer

**Also Present:** Councillor L Ayres, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education, Skills and University

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the committee for the new municipal year. Committee members were advised that there had been a request from officers to change the order of the agenda and move item 7, Update on Written Statement of Action and Joint SEND Strategy to item 6 on the agenda. The Committee unanimously agreed to the change of order.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Co-opted Members Peter Cantley and Parent Governor Clare Watchorn. Darren Ayling was in attendance as substitute for Peter Cantley. Apologies were also received from Councillor Lane.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

Declarations of interest were received from Cllr Skibsted who declared that she was a Trustee for Family Voice and Darren Ayling who declared that he was a Head Teacher at a Peterborough Secondary School.

**3. MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2021**

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4 March 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

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

There were no call-ins received at this meeting.

#### 5. **APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

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 the following Co-opted Members:

1. Appoint Alistair Kingsley as an Independent Co-opted Member with no voting rights for the municipal year 2021/2022. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year. Alistair had been a member of the committee since 2010.
2. Appoint Sameena Aziz as a Co-opted Member with no voting rights to represent the Muslim Community for the municipal year 2021/2022. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year.
3. Appoint Mohammed Younis as a Co-opted Member with no voting rights to represent Early Years for the municipal year 2021/2022. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year.
4. Appoint Parish Councillor Judith Goode as a Co-opted Member with no voting rights to represent the rural area for the municipal year 2021/2022. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year.
5. Appoint Parish Councillor June Bull as the nominated substitute for Parish Councillor Judith Goode should she be appointed as the non-voting Co-opted Member representing the rural area. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and explained that the Parish Council Co-opted Members had been put forward by the Parish Council Liaison Committee and that along with the other Co-opted Member appointments would be reviewed annually. Members were also informed that since writing the report Parish Councillor Judith Goode had withdrawn her application and therefore could no longer be considered for the role of Co-opted Member. The Committee therefore agreed to accept Parish Councillor June Bull as the nomination for the substantive role of the Parish Councillor Co-opted Member.

Cllr Rush, seconded by Cllr Fenner proposed that all four nominations be confirmed as Co-opted Members of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2021-2022 as non-voting co-opted members. The Committee agreed unanimously to all four appointments.

The Chair welcomed the four Co-opted Members who were in attendance and invited them to join the committee for the rest of the meeting.

#### **ACTIONS AGREED**

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

1. Appoint Alistair Kingsley as an Independent Co-opted Member with no voting rights for the municipal year 2021/2022. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year.
2. Appoint Sameena Aziz as a Co-opted Member with no voting rights to represent the Muslim Community for the municipal year 2021/2022. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year
3. Appoint Mohammed Younis as a Co-opted Member with no voting rights to represent Early Years for the municipal year 2021/2022. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year.
4. Appoint Parish Councillor June Bull as Co-opted Member with no voting rights to represent the rural area for the municipal year 2021/2022. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year.

## 6. UPDATE ON WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION AND JOINT SEND STRATEGY

The Service Director for Education introduced the report accompanied by the Assistant Director (SEND & Inclusion). The report provided additional and background information regarding the Written Statement of Action and the SEND, (Special educational needs and disabilities) Strategy. The Written Statement of Action had been put in place following a Joint SEND Area Inspection which was undertaken in June 2019. The Committee were advised that the next monitoring visit was due later in July. A further inspection visit was expected in the Autumn and officers were confident that enough work had been done on the areas of development highlighted by the inspection in June 2019 to show an impact and removal of the Written Statement of Action.

The Service Director for Education wanted to acknowledge the effort and amount of work that the city had undertaken to support SEND during the pandemic.

Members were informed that the Phase One plan of the SEND Strategy was now in place.

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

- Members referred to paragraph 4.1 and the area highlighted by Ofsted and CQC stating: *“Early support is well embedded for children in early years but does not follow through in all areas of the lives of children and young people as they get older. It takes too long for children, young adults and families to get the support they need.”* Members sought further clarification of this statement. The Assistant Director (SEND & Inclusion) acknowledged that this had been a key area highlighted at the time of the inspection but since then there had been more direct engagement with Early Years and work was being done to identify why it was taking so long for the support to be provided. One of the issues identified was the link to the neurodevelopment pathway which identified such things as autism. As a result, the service had been working much more closely with health colleagues and they were now part of the multi-agency approach which had led to a marked improvement.
- Members wanted to know what level of co-production had taken place with parents and carers to produce the Written Statement of Action. Members were informed that it had been noted during the inspection how effective and outstanding the level of co-production was across the city. Co-production had started from inception of the Written Statement of Action which included engagement with parent forums, young people's forums, schools, Family Voice, Voiceability and health colleagues. This had ensured that the Written Statement of Action was owned by all contributors. Co-production had also been a key part of the SEND Strategy.

- The Director for Education acknowledged the valuable work and role of Family Voice in the co-production of the SEND Strategy.
- Members sought clarification as to what the 'The Balanced System' was as mentioned on page 85 of the Written Statement of Action. Members were informed that the Balance system was a way of ensuring all the resources across all of the schools and settings were spread out fairly and evenly distributed across the city.
- Clarification was also sought on the current rate of use of part time timetables and if the achievement of a 30% reduction was on track. Members were informed that there had been a vast reduction in part time timetables across the city. A new inclusion team had been brought into Peterborough who had focused on the part time timetables as a key element and therefore the 30% reduction had been achieved.
- Members noted that the SEND Strategy was for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough but that the inspection was for Peterborough only. Members were advised that there had not been an inspection in Cambridgeshire yet, but it was expected given that the Health and Care Services were the same and therefore the issues that had been picked up would also affect Cambridgeshire. The improvements made would therefore be shared with Cambridgeshire even though the Written Statement of Action was only about Peterborough.
- Members noted that an impact report with case studies and narrative to demonstrate the progress made on the Written Statement of Action would be presented at the end of July. Members were informed that there would be a monitoring visit at which the authority was allowed to write the agenda for. The agenda would include a number of models showing what the impact could look like. The Local Authority will be working with the CQC to look at the suggested models and consider the best way forward.
- Members sought clarification on the implementation of the Written Statement of Action and how progress would be monitored. Members were advised that the Written Statement of Action was not a one-off piece of work and it would be continually developed, monitored and improved.
- The revisit would provide an opportunity for the CQC to ask questions on the five areas highlighted in the inspection for improvement and to find out what action had been taken and the impact this action had made. The service would be graded on the responses given. There was still much work to be done and some areas had been impacted by Covid however all of the five areas have had work started on them and progress had been made. Some work streams had progressed further than others and each of the work streams had an element of multi-agency accessibility which would impact on progress.
- Members were informed that a full risk assessment and recording mechanism was in place for part time timetables and the parent had to agree and understand why the part time timetable was in place. A review of this would be undertaken every three weeks or more frequently if needed. The Inclusion Service provided a range of alternative provision and where possible ensured that the child had access of up to 25 hours education which might not always be in a school setting dependent on the child's needs. Schools also provided excellent pastoral support including outreach workers. There was a good process to support Early Years settings and schools to reintegrate children back into education.
- Funding for SEN pupils was part of the school funding formula which schools would receive through their budgets. Every school received an additional amount of money to help make special educational provision to meet children's SEN. The Education Health and Care Plan's (EHCP) would also identify any resources required for each child.
- The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that she had attended the first meeting with the inspectors when the Written Statement of Action was being discussed. Many

of the queries that were raised had been to do with health, however despite the ongoing pandemic and challenges health colleagues had continued to help and address concerns within the Written Statement of Action.

- The Cabinet Member praised the Assistant Director (SEND & Inclusion) in that he had brought a clear and evident knowledge regarding SEND to the department.
- Members referred to the Joint SEND Strategic Action Plan and noted that there were many areas covered with a lot of actions for this year and asked how realistic it was to achieve them. It was also noted that there were several areas without dates and key milestones and wanted to know if these were reliant on external partners. Members were advised that it was an ambitious plan and there was a larger plan covering five years which had been condensed to make it more manageable. It had only recently been split into a phased approach and some of the boxes were empty as it was being left up to the lead sponsors to decide on the milestones. There was a newer version of the action plan where the milestone boxes have been completed but this had not been available at the time of publication of the report. A lot of work had already been completed in Phase One of the plan.
- Members noted that Cambridgeshire had a large deficit for its high needs funding, but that Peterborough currently did not. Clarification was sought on how much impact the SEND Strategy Action Plan would have on capacity within the SEND services to support the rising number of requests for EHCP's. Members were informed that the focus across Phase One was about making sure that everything was in place to support all aspects of the strategy. The legal compliance element of the action plan would ensure that work was being done more robustly and how children who have got SEND were supported through the application process. The Joint Planning and Commissioning element would also support this as it would assist in identifying what elements were needed at an early stage.
- Mapping had not yet been completed but once completed it would identify any areas of duplication.
- It was recognised that the demographics, needs and systems were completely different between Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Peterborough had its own voice and this was therefore protected.
- Capacity and resources were being monitored to ensure assessments were being completed within the required timescale.
- Members noted that one of the key concerns identified in the SEND Strategy was *"The lack of a cohesive, co-ordinated offer at transition points from services working together, particularly the issues that arise from the misalignment between health services (0-18) and Local Authority (LA) services for 0-25 year olds"*. Members wanted to know what was being done to address this. Members were informed that the misalignment at transition points had been recognised and in order to address this Transition Officers had been recruited to the SEND team. Part of their job description was to work closely with social care and health colleagues to ensure that any needs at the various transition points were pre-empted and supported at the point of transition. The impact of having these officers in place had already started to have a positive effect.
- Members noted that one of the three priority areas in the SEND Strategy was *"Deliver in the right place at the right time - improving outcomes for children and young people through making best use of resources, ensuring a graduated response and high quality local support and provision"*. Members sought clarification on how the hard to reach communities were being supported and noted the SEND leaflet and wanted to know how this was going to assist with any language barriers that parents might have. Members were informed that accessibility was taken very seriously and there was a team of people who looked at accessibility to services and made sure that a range of

languages were taken into account. Information was also provided via video and animation; work was also undertaken with youth champions in local schools and colleges to assist with rewriting policies and information that needed to be shared so that young people could help present them in their own language and terms. Everything was being done to send information and messages out in as many different ways as possible. Officers requested that Members inform them of any groups that they might feel were not being engaged with. Members were also urged to go and look at the Local Offer on the Peterborough City Council website for more information. The Local Offer gave children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and their family's information about support and services in Peterborough.

- There were challenges in that not everyone liked to receive information in the written word and work was being done to provide information in a variety of formats including videos and animation.

The Chair thanked officers for attending the meeting to present their report and answering all questions presented to them.

### **AGREED ACTIONS**

1. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to:
  - Commend the efforts of the multi-agency partners in achieving progress towards the completion of work streams across the Written Statement of Action
  - Support and acknowledge the Joint SEND strategy key aims, and
  - Confirm support for the Phased approach to the Joint SEND Strategic Action Plan with specific focus on Phase One which is being run between May 2021 and May 2022
2. The Committee also requested that the Assistant Director provide an oversight of the response to the Joint SEND Area Inspection revisit when this occurred.

### **7. SERVICE DIRECTOR AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT: CHILDREN & SAFEGUARDING**

The Service Director, Children's Services introduced the report which provided the committee with an overview of Children's Services performance in Peterborough. It also included a brief summary of activities by the Youth Offending Service, which now fell under the remit of this committee, following the transfer of the service to Children's Services from the Communities Service. The report concluded by including a summary of the recent relevant activities and functions carried out by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

The Service Director informed Members that the service had seen a greater number of children with more complex needs which was believed to be due to delayed presentation as a consequence of Covid and the fact that children had not been in school. The impact of which had seen an increase in Child Protection Plans. There were 285 children currently on a Child Protection Plan. This had not however translated into an increase in children going into the care system. The hope was that as things returned to normal and families were able to access other forms of support the number of Child Protection Plans would decrease.

The Service Director advised that Peterborough had a history of strong performance in fostering for adoption and permanency placements.

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

- Early Help. Members referred to a previous report presented to the Committee in November 2020 which presented the findings from a review of Early Help conducted by the ISOS Partnership. This review had highlighted some areas of concern and felt that the current report had not addressed these, and it was therefore hard to judge what progress had been made. Were schools monitored to see if they were coping with the demand to deliver the evidenced based parenting programmes? Members were informed that the Early Help services had a very good relationship with schools and were in regular contact with them offering support where possible. The findings of the ISOS report would be implemented, some of which was about increasing direct delivery but recognising that we would have to work within the resources that were available.
- Members noted that the report had shown a significant reduction in contacts turning into referrals. Given the pressures on capacity what extent of sample dipping was being conducted to satisfy that this was correct? Members were informed that with regard to contacts to assessments to referrals this was very heavily dip sampled. The Quality Assurance Service regularly took dip samples in order to ensure that threshold decisions taken were correct. One of the key areas that needed to be looked at again was the domestic abuse referrals. The police did not have the capacity to screen referrals before they sent them to Children's Services which meant that large numbers of referrals came from the police. Children's Services then had to sort through these to determine which children were at greatest risk. Discussions would take place with the Police to see how this situation could be improved.
- The timeliness of completion of assessments had been variable and there had been challenges in securing input from some partner agencies during the pandemic. The teams of social workers were small which meant that a person being off sick or a single vacancy can also have an impact on timeliness. Audits of the quality of the assessments found that they were good and identified any risks to children.
- During Covid adapting to new methods of working such as virtual meetings had helped but could not be used in all circumstances. Sensitive meetings had remained in a face-to-face environment where possible. Some sessions held by the Family Safeguarding Service such as group work to tackle domestic abuse and tackling substance abuse had continued both virtually and face to face when needed. There would be a blend of virtual and physical meetings moving forward.
- Members noted that the rate of First Time Entrants into the Youth Justice system per 10,000 children and young people in Peterborough has been steadily improving year on year but was still slightly higher than statistical neighbours and wanted to know who the statistical neighbours were. Members were informed that the statistical neighbours were: Portsmouth, Medway, Southampton, Sheffield, Plymouth, Dartmouth, Derby, Telford and Wrekin, Rotherham, Bolton and Wirral.
- Members sought clarification on how many referral orders, youth rehabilitation orders and detention and training orders had been given by the Peterborough courts to children and young person's given that the rate of reoffending was 1 in 3. The Officer advised that the information was not available at the meeting and would provide it after the meeting.
- Members referred to the Inspection of Youth Offending Services in Peterborough, by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation report and noted that Out of Court Disposals, Planning had been rated as inadequate and wanted to know how this was being addressed. Members were informed that this had been a sub judgement. All other ratings had been either outstanding or good. The issue around planning had been about looking at desistance and how likely the child was to reoffend by taking into account the child's history as part of the assessment and deciding what the

contingency plan would be if they did reoffend. An action plan had been put in place to address this which was monitored by the Youth Justice Board.

- The 'Safe Team' was part of the county's Youth Offending Service. It provided a team of trusted professionals who engaged with young people and supported them to remove themselves from risky environments and lifestyles. This then reduced the likelihood of the young person being involved in exploitation and crime, either as a victim or an offender. Referrals come from the police and schools. Nationally as well as locally there has been a change in understanding about how young people were groomed into criminal behaviour through exploitation by adults. The Safe Team had small caseloads and worked intensively with young people. The team has been operating for about 18 months and early outcomes data has been encouraging and positive.
- Members had noted that during the pandemic some families with young people who had disabilities had experienced financial issues and wanted to know if the Service Director was aware of this and if it could be prevented going forward. The Service Director was not aware of this and asked the Member to provide him with details after the meeting so that it could be investigated.
- Members referred to the chart at paragraph 4.34 which indicated the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans over the past year and sought clarification regarding the red target. Members were informed that there had been an issue with the reporting system and it should have shown a flat line and not a drop in numbers as indicated in the chart.
- Members referred to the chart at paragraph 4.34 which showed the proportion of visits to children subject to Child Protection Plans that had been carried out in accordance within the required timescales and wanted to know how often visits were planned. Members were informed that statutory guidance advised that visits should take place once every four weeks but the procedure in Peterborough was that visits took place on a fortnightly basis and more frequently if needed. The statutory visit was the social worker visit but in reality, there would be various other people working with and visiting the family as well in between the statutory visits.
- Members sought clarification on why there was a target for the number of referrals and contacts. Members were informed that it was an estimate of what it would be like if all parts of the system were working as expected.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education, Skills and University gave a brief introduction to her section of the report and highlighted the good work that Children's Services had done throughout the pandemic despite the difficult circumstances in which they had to operate and noted that they had continued to provide face to face meetings with those young people most at risk. Members were also informed that Councillor Ray Bisby had recently been appointed as Cabinet Advisor to the Cabinet Member and would be attending future meetings of this committee alongside the Cabinet Member.
- Members referred to paragraph 4.79 and the recent increase in Elective Home Education (EHE) and it was noted that there were national concerns regarding this. The Cabinet Member informed Members that it was felt that the rise in EHE was partly due to the pandemic and that some parents had not wanted their child to go to school because of this. The government had now issued guidance to Local Authorities which included the need for lengthy discussions with parents before any final decision was taken to assist them in understanding the implications of choosing Elective Home Education. The Association of Directors for Children's Services had undertaken an annual Elective Home Education survey to capture the number and characteristics of children and young people who were known to be home educated. The survey also aimed to understand the reasons behind a family's decision to electively home educate, how LAs across the country were supporting these families, and how any available resources were being deployed in this area. This year's survey also included a focus on the Covid-19 pandemic and how this had impacted upon the number of children and young people being electively home educated. The findings had been sent to government as there was concern that EHE was not working for every child.

- Members referred to paragraph 4.80, accompanied asylum seeking children and young people and sought clarification as to how many children and young people Peterborough accepted and if the Local Authority was confident that it accepted all that they could and if more could be taken. Members were advised that the matter was discussed on a regular basis with the Service Director and how it was working. There was an arrangement in place across the East of England so that all Local Authorities accepted a fair share of their responsibilities in supporting this group of young people. The Service Director advised that asylum seeking children were accepted when the LA were requested to. Peterborough also had a number of spontaneous arrivals who become the responsibility of the authority where they reported to authorities, which was usually the police. Peterborough was generally close to the threshold for the number of children in care which was nationally recognised as being the limit for the authority. The LA accepted children from other areas when under that limit and there was available local placement capacity for them to be placed in the City.

The Chair thanked the Service Director and Cabinet Member for attending the meeting, presenting their reports and answering all questions.

### **ACTIONS AGREED**

1. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:
  - Note and comment on the performance indicators and other measures of the effectiveness of Children's Services within the report;
  - Note the brief summary of the work of Youth Offending Services that now fell within the remit of the Committee;
  - Note and comment on the work of the Portfolio Holder in supporting the work of Children's Services locally and at regional and national levels.
2. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee requested that the Service Director, Children's Services provide the committee with the following information:
  - How many referral orders, youth rehabilitation orders and detention and training orders had been given by the Peterborough courts to children and young persons
  - To include within a future report on Early Help Services the actions taken following the review of Early Help Services by the ISOS Partnership and any available performance information on the effectiveness of Early Help Services in Peterborough.

### **8. REVIEW OF 2020/2021 AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2021/2022**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the report which considered the 2020/2021 year in review and looked at the work programme for the new municipal year 2021/22 to determine the Committees priorities. Members also noted the Terms of Reference for the Committee which now included the additional service area for Targeted Youth Support (including youth offending).

### **AGREED ACTIONS**

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

1. Consider the items presented to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee during 2020/21 and make recommendations on the future monitoring of these items where necessary.

2. Determine its priorities and approve the draft work programme for 2021/2022 attached at Appendix 1.
3. Note 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 1 Children and Education Scrutiny Committee as attached at Appendix 2.

## 9. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, containing decisions which the Leader of the Council anticipated Cabinet or Cabinet Members would take over 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.

### AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions which identified any relevant items for inclusion within their work programme, and requested further information on the following decision:

- Specialist Services Framework for Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council - KEY/24MAY21/01

The date of next meeting was noted as being 6 September 2021.

Chair

7.00pm to 8.55pm