

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7.00PM, ON
THURSDAY 12 JANUARY 2023
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillors L Robinson (Chair), J Allen, M Farooq, S Farooq, S Hemraj (Vice Chair), D Over, R Ray, M Rangzeb, A Shaheed, H Skibsted and Statutory Education Co-opted Members Peter Cantley, Dr Andy Stone, and Independent Co-opted Member Parish Councillor Michael Samways

Also in attendance: Tiffany Chan Youth Council Representative

Officers Present: Elaine Redding, Executive Director of Children's Services
Jonathan Lewis, Director of Education
Dee Glover, Head Teacher Peterborough Virtual School
Nichola Phillips, Deputy Head Teacher Peterborough Virtual School
Joanne Proctor, Head of Service Children and Adults Safeguarding
Councillor Dennis Jones, Chair of Corporate Parenting Committee
Charlotte Cameron, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present: Councillor Lynne Ayres, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Skills, and University.
Councillor Ray Bisby, Cabinet Advisor to Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Skills, and University

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fenner, Lane, Rush, and Independent Co-opted Member Sameena Aziz.

Councillors J Allen and Rangzeb were in attendance as substitutes.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

36. MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2 NOVEMBER 2022

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2 November 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

37. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS

No call-ins were received.

38. REPORT ON WORK OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE FOR THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2021-2022

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the work of the Corporate Parenting Committee 2021-2022.

The purpose of the report was to advise the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee of activity carried out by the Corporate Parenting Committee in the municipal year 2021-2022.

The Chair of Corporate Parenting Committee accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Children Services, Education and the University and Cabinet Advisor to Cabinet Member for Childrens Services, Education, Skills, and the University introduced the report and highlighted key points including:

The report provided an overview of the work of the Corporate Parenting Committee. Members were advised that the Committee held both informal and formal meetings that covered various themed agendas. The report detailed how the committee dealt with topics such as placements, safeguarding and health and wellbeing.

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

- Members referred to the lack of placements that meant children were placed outside of the city and queried if this was suitable. The Executive Director of Children's Services agreed that this was not an ideal situation but advised there would be challenges in relation to the complexity of needs and a decline in foster care.
- Members were encouraged to see the positive work of the Corporate Parenting Committee and that it had been on par with statistical neighbours.
- Members queried if there was a case for increasing the remuneration for foster carers so they would be better equipped to respond to more complex needs. Members were advised that there was a need for a tariff system that identified the needs of young people.
- Members sought clarification on whether the financial resources were in place to support the refresh of the Care Leaver Covenant. The Executive Director Children's Services advised that there would be financial support for this, and this would remain the case.
- The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee advised that the data on the champions on page 14 was now out of date. There had been two corporate foster caring champions who would review how the service could be improved and focused on foster care retention.
- Members were advised that the team of young inspectors had found several points of updates which had been implemented and were due to start their second round of inspections. They had won a national award for their efforts from Coram Voice a national Charity focused on the needs for children in care and adoption.
- Members applauded the achievement of the young inspectors and the role they played in providing Officers with scrutiny on that area of provision.
- Members were advised that since the report had been published, there had been success in getting a dentist to volunteer their time to provide dental care for young people in care. Members thanked those who had helped to secure this provision.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report and accept recommendations.

39. ANNUAL REPORT OF PETERBOROUGH VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN IN CARE 2020-2021 and 2021-2022

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the Annual Report of Peterborough Virtual School for Children in Care 2020-2021 And 2021-2022.

The purpose of the report was to inform on the activity of the Peterborough Virtual School (PVS) and the educational outcomes of Peterborough's Children in Care (CIC) for the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22. It reflects on achievements and identifies areas in need of development to achieve the best outcomes for this vulnerable group. Data contained in this report is for Children in Care who had been in the care of Peterborough City Council for a year or more on 31 March 2022.

The Head Teacher Peterborough Virtual School, Deputy Head Teacher Peterborough Virtual School and the Cabinet Member for Children Services, Education, Skills and the University introduced the report and key points raised included:

It was advised that the report included some unvalidated data which would be updated in March 2023

This had been the first year since the pandemic where formal assessments had been re-introduced and some children had found it difficult to adjust back to the formality of assessment. The data was looked at with caution due to the low numbers which had made year on year comparison difficult.

There had been an increase from 69% to 73% in the stability of homes which had a significant impact on educational stability.

There had been an increase in suspensions and the data had been drawn from the attendance collection service. Evidence of this had been highlighted through an increased number of referrals to external education services and psychologists, particularly in secondary school girls.

The GCSE results were disappointing but there were some children who were too anxious to go into their exams. This reinforced the need for the continued connected communities project which aimed to make sure all those working in the school were aware of the trauma that all children may have suffered which impacted the way they presented themselves in school. Work would continue to challenge education settings to be trauma informed and responsive.

The team had faced some employee changes, but this had allowed for a restructure and the chance to re-evaluate how the service performed in the changing educational times.

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

- Members thanked Officers for providing both reports.
- Members referred to Key Stage 3 (KS3) and queried if their progress had been measured given there are no statutory exam requirements. The Deputy Head

Teacher Peterborough Virtual School advised that all Children in Care (CIC) had a termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting where their attainment and progress were discussed.

- Members followed up and asked whether there were any concerns with the current KS3 cohort and what would be done to support them. Members were advised that it was hard to predict but that the cohort were looking stable and would be monitored closely.
- Members were advised that the aspirations of the children were monitored from Year 9 and ensured that all involved were there to support them.
- Members referred to page 63 and sought clarification on how children were supported when they were placed outside of the city. The Head Teacher Peterborough Virtual School advised that children were monitored wherever they were placed. Members noted that the team would ensure that the local authority or school was supporting the child in the correct ways.
- Members queried if the support was working when the team could not visit the child. Members were advised that the school retained responsibility and if the child required intervention, they would source that within the authority and school where the child was placed.
- Members noted that the data does not suggest that those children placed out of city performed less well than those within the city.
- Members sought clarification on the increase in suspensions and were advised that the increase had been a direct result of those children who had been in school during the pandemic and had found it difficult to adjust when things returned to normal.
- The Director of Education highlighted that these trends in the virtual school were mirrored in the rest of the school system. This had been picked up as a key priority for the team and they would look at what lays behind it nationally.
- Members questioned if there had been an improvement in the PEP plans and how they were monitored. The Officers advised that the team worked with the designated staff to make sure the PEPs were of an exceptional quality. The team made sure to involve the child in the target-setting process and attended every initial PEP meeting.
- The Director for Education advised that there was a rising cohort for special school provision and there were plans to deal with this that would be provided in the next Service Director Report. The team had noticed that the needs emerging for severe learning difficulties were slightly different to the national picture.
- Members referred to the Outdoor Learning Adventure (OLA) and queried whether progress was monitored and if there would be continued funding. The Deputy Head Teacher Peterborough Virtual School advised that though it had rebranded, the OLA would still work to develop resilience, problem solving and teamwork. The team worked with the designated teachers to set targets to evaluate the children's progress and ensure that all children would leave with a sense of achievement in some form.
- Members noted that the funding was ring-fenced and funded through the pupil premium grant received for CIC up to the age of 16. There was ongoing work to identify secondary schools that the OLA could get into partnership with.
- Members questioned whether the team had worked with neighbouring virtual schools to provide additional benefits and resources. The Director for Education advised that the shared service arrangements with Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) had identified that the needs of the city were different to the needs of the county.

- The Head Teacher Peterborough Virtual School further advised that they were part of the Eastern Region Virtual School Heads Group that met termly and shared ideas and initiatives, a strong network of support.
- Members questioned if there were sufficient routes to support those children who needed Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Members were advised that this was an increasing national challenge and the work of the educational psychologist (Dr Chloe Marks) had helped to offer support early.
- Members noted the success of Dr Chloe Marks and queried if there were plans to increase that level of provision. The Officers advised that inhouse support was being investigated and had been budgeted for.
- Members referred to persistent absence and queried what the strategies were to deal with the children who this related to. Members were advised that there had been a rise in teenage girls unable to attend schools as a result of emotional based school avoidance.
- Members noted that absence was tracked daily, and the team had an alerting system so that they were aware of the issues.
- Members were advised that the SEMH needs of teenage girls manifested in different ways and the team were promoting trauma informed training as some dysregulation is introverted and they were to highlight that issue within education settings.
- The Director of Education advised that the team were actively looking at identifying the needs that were different for girls were looking to conduct further research.

AGREED ACTIONS

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

- Note the content of the report.
- Raise any queries or future focus they wish officers to report on at future meetings.

40. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Children Partnership Board Annual Report 2021-22.

The purpose of this report was to provide the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee members with a summary of both the work of the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board and the work of the sub committees and highlight the remarkable events from April 2021-March 2022.

The Head of Service: Children and Adults Safeguarding accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Childrens Services, Education, Skills and the University introduced the report and highlighted key items including:

This was a report brought every year as part of the council's statutory duty. The report covered 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and had been signed off in November 2022. The report was the subject of independent scrutiny from Dr Russel Waite who had confirmed that he was happy with the work of the board and the report.

The Safeguarding Children Partnership were responsible for safeguarding practice reviews and had published two reviews within the timeframe of the report. All recommendations from those reviews had been actioned and the impact of the local

recommendations would be monitored. There were also several national recommendations and the ability to influence that work had been limited.

The Department for Education (DfE) and the National Panel for Approach to Engagement commended the team as an example of national good practice and the team had delivered seminars on their approach.

There had been significant levels of engagement with young people around their experiences of unconscious bias and what steps could be taken to improve this. The work had resulted in a virtual briefing and training delivered and informed EDI conversations.

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

- Members noted that 12% of contacts became referrals and questioned why this was the case. The Executive Director of Children's Services advised that referrals environments and awareness campaigns can be evidence for an increase but that there was no definitive answer.
- Members sought further information on the work on unconscious bias and why this had been chosen as a piece of work. The Head of Service: Children and Adults Safeguarding advised that this had come from an early help piece of work where there were some pieces of anecdotal evidence.
- Members noted that the work explored the comments made and asked children and parents to speak to her about their experiences. Comments were not only about race, but there were also comments about gender, accents and hair colour. The results suggested there were lack of education resources for professionals in understanding their comments.
- The Officer highlighted that some agencies had used the report as a mandatory training resource, and it had been shared across all the schools in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Members referred to the impact of the pandemic of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and sought clarification on the work being done to make sure these cases did not fall under the radar. The Officer advised that there were lots of cases that would go unreported and that locally there were specialist doctors and health professionals who were leaders in this area and there were workforce development programmes to increase conversations.
- The Executive Director Children's Services advised that they could provide the Committee with data on Female Genital Mutilation that includes information on reporting and support services.
- Members questioned whether the Council were able to look at the workforce of schools to ensure the demographic meets the needs of the children. The Director of Education advised that this had been a challenge and that the needs of schools were reviewed and whether schools were positively recruiting into specific demographic areas.
- The Head of Service: Children and Adults Safeguarding further advised that there had been some positive examples of schools who had embraced some of their cultural differences and had encouraged young people to discuss their cultures with their peers.
- Members referred to how 23% of all referrals were rereferrals and questioned how the referrals were monitored. The Executive Director Children's Services advised that there were two indicators, missing information and different needs, that would identify the need for a re-referral.

- Members noted that work was done with other agencies regarding how they referred things in to ensure the risk was articulated correctly and to ensure the quality of the first referral was good.
- Members followed up and queried that if the re-referral was reported as a different issue, it could be highlighted as a separate referral to indicate it was not the initial issue. Members were advised that the data system does not facilitate that, but that work could be done to display the data in this way for future reports.
- Members sought clarification of the impact of the training and monitoring of uptake from across different sectors. The Officer advised that a training report was produced and would go to the safeguarding board for sign off which highlighted agency take up.
- Members noted that where there was a disproportionate take up, contexts were reviewed and teams were asked what they were going to change,

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the annual report.

The Committee also requested that the Executive Director Children's Services and Head of Service for Children and Adults Safeguarding provide the Committee with data on Female Genital Mutilation that includes information on reporting and support services.

41. SERVICE DIRECTOR REPORT: CHILDREN & SAFEGUARDING

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the Service Director Report for Children and Safeguarding.

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an overview of children's services performance in Peterborough and outlined the impending Ofsted Inspection of the service.

The Executive Director of Children's Services accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Education, Skills and the University introduced the report and highlighted key items including:

The department were in preparation for an expected Ofsted inspection which had influenced various factors of the report. A note was provided that the Cabinet Member Portfolio Update had been included at section 6.1 but was not comprehensive.

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

- Members noted the Early Help section and requested that they be provided with the performance and outcomes of Early Help support in the next Service Director Report.
- Members questioned why the re-referrals were low and if we knew why this was and if professionals would not re-refer if the original was refused. Members were advised that re-referrals were captured once, twice and three times to identify if there was a different need. It is the Services responsibility to be curious and should not take no refer actions if the referral lack quality.
- Members noted that re-referrals would be a result of a combination of more information, different need and different agency resource. The Officer further advised that benchmarking nationally was not always as important as local benchmarking and that any re-referral over 10% should be reviewed.

- Members were encouraged by the lower number of child protection plans (CPP) and that the amount had fallen to below pre-pandemic levels.
- Members sought clarification on what aspects of the Family Safeguarding Approach has been most significant in effecting that improvement. Members were advised that a gap analysis had been undertaken to understand the impact of the approach to provide those answers and some assurances.
- Members questioned what support there was for those close to the threshold of CPP but do not qualify. The Officer advised that there were family networks that worked well and mitigated the need to be on a CPP plan.
- Members referred to the turnaround of referrals and questioned what was being done to meet targets. The Officer advised that 45 days was a long time in the life of the child and believed that there should be a 20-, 30- and 45-day contact point. This would allow referrals to become assessments in a more efficient way and support officer caseloads.
- Members requested that they be provided with details on whether 100% of re-referrals are successful and if that indicates a first-time failure, either in the decision or the application.

The Chair then permitted the Cabinet Member for Childrens Services, Education, Skills, and the University to provide an update on their portfolio.

The Cabinet Member highlighted their widespread portfolio and identified that it had been a comprehensive year to date, key points raised included:

The year had been comprehensive with reports nationally and the Cabinet Member had joined the Integrated Care System (ICS) Joint Health and Well-being board so that Children's Services were represented. Regular meetings were now held with public health in order to support this.

The Cabinet Members had held regular meetings with the Executive Director Children's Services and Director of Education.

AGREED ACTIONS

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 inspection activity by our regulator, Ofsted, within the next month.

The Committee also requested that the Executive Director Children's Services:

1. Provide the Committee with performance and outcomes of Early Help support in the next Service Director Report.
2. Provide the Committee with details on whether 100% of re-referrals are successful and if that indicates a first-time failure, either in the decision or the application.

42. COMMITTEE START TIME REPORT

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and sought the committees' views on what start time they would like for the new municipal year 2023-2024.

The following recommendation was made by Councillor Over and seconded by Councillor Ray, that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee's formal committee meeting should start at 7.00pm.

The Committee voted **UNANIMOUSLY** in favour of the recommendation and the recommendation was **CARRIED**.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to agree the start time of 7.00pm for all Children and Education Scrutiny Committee meetings for the Municipal Year 2023-24.

43. MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- There were no questions raised.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the responses from Cabinet Members and Officers to recommendations made at previous meetings as attached in Appendix 1 to the report.

44. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which included the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions containing decisions that the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the plan and where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

- Members were reminded that the request for an update on the Werrington Fields and Ken Stimpson Secondary School decision from the previous meeting would be provided once a Section 77 response had been issued by central government.

AGREED ACTIONS

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

45. WORK PROGRAMME 2022-2023

The Democratic Services Officer presented the report which looked at the work programme for the municipal year 2022/23 to determine the Committees priorities.

- Members were reminded that the request to see the Transport Strategy action plan from the previous meeting had been noted and the Committee would be provided with it in the new municipal year.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the Work Programme for 2022/2023 and **RESOLVED** to note the report.

46. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees was noted as being 23 January 2023.

The date of the next Children and Education Scrutiny Committee meeting was noted as being 8 March 2023.

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CHAIR

Meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.48pm