

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7.00PM, ON
MONDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2023
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillors Shaheed (Chair), Hemraj (Vice Chair), Bisby, Cole, Fenner, Lane, Rangzeb, Skibsted, Warren and Parish Council Co-opted Member Katie Howard.

Statutory Co-opted Member Andy Stone.

Youth Councillor Daisy Blakemore-Creedon.

Officers Present: John Gregg, Executive Director Children and Young People's Service
Alison Bennett, Service Director, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Jodie Lefevre, Targeted Support Interim Head of Service,
Lydia Bennett, Head of Family Safeguarding,
Madia Afzal, Democratic Services Officer and
Charlotte Cameron, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: Councillor Jackie Allen, Cabinet Advisor for Children's Services.
Councillor Over, Cabinet Advisor for Children Services and Education.

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ahmed, Lane, Asif and Statutory Co-opted Members Peter French and Sameena Aziz.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

No declarations of interest or whipping declarations were received.

13. MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY MEETING HELD ON 20 JULY 2023

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Meeting held on 20 July 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

14. CALL IN

None were received for this meeting.

15. SUPPLEMENTARY APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS 2023/24

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 Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and explained that the nominations for Parish Council Co-opted Members had been put forward by the Parish Council Liaison Committee (PCLC) and that the appointments would be reviewed annually.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval from the Committee to appoint Katie Howard as a Non-Voting Co-opted Member for the municipal year 2023/24 to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Part 3, Section 4 – Overview and Scrutiny Functions.

The Committee unanimously agreed to the appointment of Parish Councillor Katie Howard as a Non-Voting Co-opted Member for the municipal year 2023/24.

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

AGREED ACTIONS:

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

1. Appoint Parish Councillor Katie Howard as a Co-opted Member with no voting rights for the municipal year 2023/2024. Appointment to be reviewed annually at the beginning of the next municipal year.

16. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Senior Democratic 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.

- Clarification the Werrington Fields decision was sought. The committee were advised that a letter would be written to the Department for Education (DfE).
- Members queried the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT) and whether there were sufficient resources in place to provide the required level of service. It was advised that discussions with CPFT were ongoing and alternative options were being explored with regards to the implementation of the family model in question.

AGREED ACTIONS:

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

The Committee also requested that Officers:

- Write to the DfE to seek clarification on why the decision on the Werrington Fields process had taken so long.

17. CLARE LODGE UPDATE

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the work of Clare Lodge.

The report sought to provide the Committee with an update on the recent Ofsted inspection, which was undertaken at Clare Lodge as well as the current financial position.

The Director for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance introduced the report and key points raised included:

- It was confirmed that residents were in receipt of very good care.
- Members were advised that Clare Lodge was working through the Programme Plan and striving to become a centre of excellence.
- It was hoped that income would be generated through the recently established charging model.

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

- Officers were congratulated for their work in respect of Clare Lodge with an emphasis being placed on the impressive staff retention rates.
- Members queried the number of people residing at Clare Lodge, it was confirmed that 6 people were residing at the Children's Secure Home.
- Clarification on the number of employees was sought, it was advised that the Children's Home had 19 full-time employees.
- Attention was drawn to the positive staff retention rates and the Committee were advised that Clare Lodge was looking to increase staff numbers.
- The Officer was asked to elaborate on the operating model of Clare Lodge as well as the ongoing work with the DfE. The working DfE expert group was noted.
- Furthermore, Members were advised that the group was looking into various operating models and that an initial meeting had taken place.
- It was reiterated that management were keen to promote the Children's Home as centre of excellence for vulnerable young women and that inquiries in relation to availability from local authorities were being logged.
- Further information on the purpose of the programme plan was sought. The different stages of the programme plan were highlighted and the Centre's vision for excellence was detailed. Moving forward, the Committee were advised that the service area sought to prioritise health.
- In response to the question on the support for young women over the age of 17, it was advised that individual circumstances would be taken into consideration. For instance, some young women could be moved onto supported accommodation whilst others into foster care.
- Clarification on the age criteria was sought as Members queried whether the service area intended to extend the age limit for residents of the Secure Home. The Committee were assured that alternative arrangements would be put in place for vulnerable young women over the age of 17. However, legislation didn't permit the Children's Home to detain individuals over this age.
- In respect to the financial implications and the delays surrounding invoices and payments, it was advised that the deadline for submission had been reduced to 7 days to monitor financing and reduce exposure that related to money owed.

- The support for staff outside of Clare Lodge was queried. It was confirmed that work was underway and that headteachers were supported by an officer from the education department.
- Clarification on the ongoing workforce and recruitment challenges was sought. The Committee were advised that vacancies were attracting a high volume of applicants. However, challenges derived from the pursuit for the right candidate and the stricter recruitment process.

AGREED ACTIONS:

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

1. The contents of the report.
2. Comment on any aspects of the report.

18. PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES OF EARLY HELP SUPPORT REPORT

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the performance and outcomes of Early Help support. The report was requested by the Children's and Education Scrutiny Committee following their group representative meeting.

The purpose of this report was to update the Committee on the performance and outcomes of Early Help support in Peterborough.

The interim Head of Services for Children's Services and Young People introduced the report. Key areas were highlighted, and it was confirmed that targets set by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities for the financial year 2023/24 had been met. Changes to the Early Help Assessment Framework were also highlighted and the ongoing work in relation to the Supporting Families Fund – Family Hub was detailed.

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

- Members queried the progress in terms of the acquisition of sites and numbers for the Family Hubs Two Year Programme to identify sites and grow existing hubs.
- It was advised that the authority was working closely with partner organisations to identify potential sites in the North and South.
- With regards to existing buildings and whether these could be used as hubs, the Officer was unable to provide a conclusive answer.
- Clarification on 4.7 of the report was sought. The Officer agreed to provide the Committee with a briefing note to confirm the percentage of children in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), how the figures are calculated and details of comparison with our statistical neighbours.
- Members queried the referral element of the Supporting Families Programme. It was confirmed that referrals to the Programme were made by schools and other service areas.
- In terms of accessibility, it was confirmed that no accessibility issues had been identified and that families had full access to the hubs.
- Discussions also centred around the eligibility criteria for the Supporting Families Programme. It was noted that Officers would support families who were not eligible where applicable.
- Members sought clarification on the progress in respect of the Supporting Families Fund. The Officer confirmed that good progress had been made and a briefing note

would confirm the percentage of children Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Information on how the figures were calculated would also be provided.

- Members further queried the eligibility criteria and the support in place for applicants with disabilities and English as a second language. The Committee were advised that Lead Professionals were at hand to guide families through the application process.
- In terms of support and numbers, it was noted that families were always welcome to reach out as a cap had not been placed on the number of applicants.
- The Executive Director thanked Officers and partners for their efforts in respect of this project.

AGREED ACTIONS:

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

1. Comment on the report of the Performance and Outcomes of Early Help Support and make recommendations as they see fit for future service delivery.

The Committee also requested that Officers:

- Provide the Committee with a briefing note to confirm the percentage of children in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), how the figures are calculated and details of comparison with our statistical neighbours.

19. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN SERVICES AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES & PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT: INTERGRATED FRONT DOOR

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the progress made against the Ofsted improvement plan.

The purpose of this report was to update the Committee on the developments to date.

The Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding presented the report which detailed the progress made against the Ofsted improvement plan and key points raised included:

- The three overarching outcomes were detailed.
- The vision for the service area was highlighted; it was hoped that timeliness would improve, and risks would be managed effectively with none being missed.
- In terms of recruitment, the appointment of the interim Peterborough City Council Head of Service for Children's Services and Safeguarding and three social workers was noted. Furthermore, it was hoped that vacant managerial and senior practitioner posts would be filled in the coming weeks.
- The Officer talked Members through the completed audits which highlighted improvements in quality and consistency as well as areas for development. Members were assured that the service area had robust quality assurances in place.

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

- Clarification on the Child Exploitation Hub was sought, with one Member querying its progress. It was advised that the Hub was in its development stage. However, work in

respect of protocols and processes was underway with partner agencies and Officers were keen to update Members at a future scrutiny meeting.

- In terms of health and the resources available to respond to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) enquires, challenges such as the high volume of work were highlighted. Members requested a briefing note on the planned breaches of statutory duties in the public health team regarding Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- In response to the Member's query on backup IT systems should the current system go down, it was confirmed that contingency plans were in place – other channels of communication would remain open.

AGREED ACTIONS:

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

1. Review and comment on the progress update in respect of the Integrated Front Foor against the Ofsted improvement plan.

The Committee also requested that Officers:

- Provide a briefing note on the planned breaches of statutory duties in the public health team regarding Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- In future reports, include the reasoning for why the action points in the action plan had been rated as red, amber, or green.

20. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024

The Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the report which considered the relevant items presented in 2023/24 of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee and looked at the work programme for the new municipal year 2023/24 to determine the Committees priorities. Members also noted the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

- The Committee requested a contribution from Family Voice. The Officer confirmed that the forthcoming report would incorporate this contribution.

AOB:

- Clarification on the recruitment of a permanent Officer for Children's Services and Safeguarding was sought, with one Member querying the number of applications received to date. The Officer was not able to confirm the exact number of applications due to them being managed externally. However, it was hoped that a permanent Officer would be appointed by the beginning of next year.

AGREED ACTIONS:

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

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The date of the next meeting was noted as being 6 November 2023.

CHAIR

Meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.23pm