

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT 7.00PM, ON  
MONDAY, 11 MARCH 2024  
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

<b>Committee Members Present:</b> Shaheed (Chair), Asif, Cole, Hemraj (Vice Chair), Over, Rush, Skibsted and Tyler (sub).
Youth Councillors: Abigail Adebayo and Daisy Blakemore-Cretdon.

<b>Officers Present:</b>	Madia Afzal, Democratic Services Officer Sarah Graves, Service Director for Targeted Support and Safeguarding Services John Gregg, Executive Director for Children’s Services Alice Peatling, Head of Service for MASH
<b>Also Present:</b>	Cllr Ray Bisby, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

**41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Lane, Fenner, Cllr Tyler was in attendance as substitute and Cllr Rangzeb.

Co-opted Members: Dr Andy Stone, Samina Aziz and Peter French.

**42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

There were no declarations received.

**43. MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 204 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**44. CALL-IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISION**

None were received for this meeting.

**45. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Chair 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 on the PCC SEND and AP expenditure – KEY/3JUL23/01 decision was sought with the Committee querying what the future expected spend was based on.

- In response, it was advised that it was the mechanism that was used to procure and commission alternative provision and that this wasn't limited to numbers.
- A query on the timings of the Medgen Nursing Services Limited - KEY/17JUL23/02 decision was raised. It was confirmed that the young person's placement was likely to surpass 9 months.
- In terms of the Committee's query on how the 9 months were determined, Members were advised that the case was of a sensitive and complex nature and that the finer details would be taken offline and clarified via a briefing note.

#### **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:

- Provide a briefing note on the Medgen Nursing Services Limited - KEY/17JUL23/02 decision.

#### **46. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the effectiveness of services in meeting the needs of children in care and care leavers during the reporting year 2022 to 2023.

The report sought to provide the Committee with an overview of how the duties of the Council and partner agencies had been discharged in respect of meeting the needs of children in care and care leavers.

The Executive Director for Children's Services accompanied by the Head of Service for MASH introduced the report and key points raised included:

- The key achievements and concerns were outlined.
- Attention was drawn to the improvements in respect to the timeliness of Annual Health Assessment Reports and Officers were pleased to note the strong Participation Service and Voice of The Child.
- It was confirmed that 99% of reviews for looked after children had been held within statutory timescales.
- The areas of improvement were noted as being sufficiency of accommodation for care leavers, increasing the sufficiency of foster carers, and increasing the ability of long-term children in care.

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

- It was confirmed that the strategy had been devised in 2022-2023.
- The Committee queried how long care leavers had to wait before they could access supported accommodation.
- In response, the importance of good quality and appropriate accommodation was stressed, and it was confirmed that 6% of care leavers had not been seen within timescales and were waiting on suitable accommodation.
- Further queries were raised in respect to the timescales, it was acknowledged that the sufficiency of accommodation for care leavers ought to be improved.
- Members were updated on the 6% of care leavers who were waiting to be housed and the availability of appropriate accommodation was noted as being a reason for the delay.
- The Committee queried what the authority was doing to enable care leavers to

access housing.

- In response, the partnership with the National House Project was detailed, and it was confirmed that Members would be updated on this work in the coming months.
- In terms of planning applications involving foster carers, it was suggested that Children's Services and the Planning Department work collaboratively to give more leeway to such applications.
- In response, Officers encouraged greater working together to house children in foster care.
- Furthermore, it was confirmed that Children's Services often worked well with the Planning department in respect to the development and creation of new children's homes.
- In terms of Councillor Skibsted's query pertaining to the ongoing planning application, the Executive Director for Children's Services agreed to liaise with the Member to find an effective resolution for the parties involved.
- Clarification on the funding and resources for the Virtual School was sought.
- The Committee were advised that the Virtual School had built capacity within their team to meet the needs of looked after children and previously looked after children.
- Clarification on the data in respect to teeth and health assessments on page 47 of the supplementary agenda pack – Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2022-23 was sought.
- The Executive Director for Children's Services agreed to review the data and provide clarification via email.
- The Service area was congratulated on their recent Civic Award win.

#### **AGREED ACTIONS:**

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

1. Note and comment on the Annual Corporate Parenting Report for 2022-2023.
2. Comment on how services for children and young people are being delivered based on the Local Government Association Corporate Parenting self-assessment tool.
3. Make recommendations on the future monitoring of the priority improvement areas identified in the annual corporate parenting report 2022-2023.
4. Consider the need for an updated Corporate Parenting Strategy.

The Committee also requested that Officers:

- Liaise with Cllr Skibsted in respect of the child in foster care/planning case to find an effective resolution for the parties involved.
- Provide clarification on the data in respect of children accessing a dentist and annual health assessments on page 47 of the report (Appendix 3).

#### **47. OUTCOME OF OFSTED ILACS INSPECTION OF PETERBOROUGH CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the

OFSTED ILACS inspection findings.

The report sought to provide the Committee with an update on the implications and the broader partnership of agencies working with children and young people in Peterborough on improving outcomes.

The Executive Director for Children's Services accompanied by the recently appointed Service Director for Targeted Support and Safeguarding Services introduced the report and welcomed question from Committee members.

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

- Officers were reminded that the Committee had requested the RAG rated, target setting sheet on the Front Door at a previous Committee meeting and queried when this would be provided.
- The Committee were advised that Children's Services were currently in the process of formulating the response to the OFSTED inspection.
- Furthermore, it was acknowledged that there was still more to be done in respect to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- It hoped that Members would be updated on the detailed action plan at the first meeting of the next municipal year.
- The Committee queried whether the ILACS inspection had set a date for a follow-up inspection.
- It was confirmed that Children's Services has been placed into formal intervention as a result of the inadequate rating, and that they were due to have 6, 2-day inspections under the ILACS Framework within 24 months.
- Furthermore, it was advised that Officers had met with OFSTED last week to schedule the monitoring visits. It was confirmed that the first visit would take place in July and the second prior to Christmas.
- Clarification on 4.1 of the report, challenges in respect to the improvement agenda and workload challenges, was sought, with the Committee querying whether the volume of work had reduced for the workers in question.
- The concerns around timeliness and quality of work were acknowledged, and Members were updated on the steps which had been taken to mitigate workload pressures in the short term.
- In terms of the local offer for care leavers, it was confirmed that a paper had been scheduled for the forthcoming meeting of Cabinet and that a renewed and reinvigorated offer would be carried out in 2 phases.
- It was also noted that the 2 phases would be subject to scrutiny in the new municipal year and the £140k investment was outlined.
- Members queried whether the service area had received cross-party support following Councillor Sandra Bond's successful motion on notice to Full Council on 6 December 2023.
- Officers were pleased to note the support from different political parties on the Revised Care Leavers Offer.
- A further query on the workload of social workers was raised and whether there were sufficient funds to support the needs of children who required assistance from social workers.
- In response, the funding issues were acknowledged. However, Members were assured that moving forward, the service area would receive the desired level of funding
- Clarification on the Executive Director's vision for Children's Services was sought.
- The Executive Director outlined his vision which entailed children thriving at school, residing with loving families and having a wealth of opportunities when

they reach adulthood.

- In essence, what Members would wish for their own children is what the Executive Director wished for Children's Services.
- In terms of the support from Councillors, Members were encouraged to be champions for children and were encouraged to advocate the authority's fostering service.
- Members were also advised to get involved in the new Child Friendly Campaign and to be the best corporate parents.
- The Committee requested materials which would enable them to promote the authority's fostering service within their prospective wards.
- The Executive Director for Children's Services agreed to provide the materials.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services confirmed that additional training for corporate parents had been proposed following the election period in May.
- It was also confirmed that once delivered, a review of the training would be carried out in 6 months to determine whether any further coaching was required.

#### **AGREED ACTIONS:**

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

- Note the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services under the inspection framework: The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services [ILACS];
- Note the areas for development recorded in the inspection report and agrees in principle to support officers in delivering continuing improvement, continuing the strong tradition of corporate and Member support for Children's Services.

The Committee also requested that Officers:

- Provide Members with publicity materials to enable them to effectively promote fostering within their respective wards.
- Provide Members with a briefing and training on fostering in the next municipal year.

#### **48. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as being the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2024.

CHAIR

Meeting started at 7.00pm and finished at 19:50pm

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