

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 6.00PM, ON
MONDAY, 27 JANUARY 2025
ENGINE SHED, SAND MARTIN HOUSE, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Skibsted (Chair), Asif Shaheed, Hillier, Khan, Warren, Hemraj and Boyce.

Youth Councillors: Daniel Daboh, Youth MP

Officers Present:

Charlotte Cameron, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Zoe Lattimer, Virtual School Head Teacher

Hannah Thorpe, Acting Head of Service Independent Safeguarding Partnership Service
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Safeguarding Boards (Children and Adults)

Belinda Evans Complaint Manager

Carrie Traill, Service Director for Education

Sara Graves, Service Director, Targeted Support & Safeguarding

John Gregg, Executive Director for Children's Services

Also present: Councillor Cole, Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Geraghty, Jenkins and Bisby. Councillor Boyce was in attendance as substitute.

Apologies for absence were also received from Parish Councillor Taylor-Pitt and Canon Andrew Read.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

Councillor Boyce declared an interest in relation to the Annual Peterborough Virtual School Report 2023-2024 as a member of the Fire Authority.

33. MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

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

None were received for this meeting.

35. 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.

- There were no questions.

AGREED ACTIONS

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

36. ANNUAL PETERBOROUGH VIRTUAL SCHOOL REPORT 2023-2024

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the work undertaken by Peterborough Virtual School during the academic year 2023-2024.

The Virtual School Head Teacher introduced the report and key points raised included:

- The report focused on the academic year 2023-2024 and advised that another term had been completed.
- There had been a full restructure, and the offer would be enhanced.
- The revised structure had been included in the report and as of January 2025 there was a fully staffed virtual school.

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

- Members commended the work that Officers were doing. Members referred to the Key Stage 2 data (KS2) and noted that the two children in Wales had no KS2 data as there were in Wales. This had tipped the data overall.
- There had been a national increase in the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions.
- Members noted that exclusions for children in care did not work as it often led to feelings of rejection. The school offered training around trauma and alternatives to exclusions.
- Members queried whether other schools in the city were supportive of the Virtual School's work and were advised that designated teachers were on board but getting the message through to senior leaders had been a challenge.
- Members were referred to the SATS results and noted that that cohort had been those who did not sit their Key Stage 1 (KS1) tests as it had been during covid.
- There had been a pooled use of finance to achieve the best educational outcomes for children through their personal education plans (PEP).
- Some funding had been used to support staffing resources as well as providing the training offer at no extra charge.
- The number of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) had increased to 22% and Members were advised that this fluctuated throughout the year.
- Members noted that literacy levels for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) were low for CIC and the Officer advised that there was one child who had struggled which impacted the overall numbers.
- The HE offer had increased and the school offered learner days at Anglian Ruskin to highlight what it would be like to attend university.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and made no further recommendations.

37. ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD REPORT 2023-2024

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the work of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board against the Board priorities, the work of the subcommittees and highlight the significant events from April 2023 - March 2024.

The Acting Head of Service Independent Safeguarding Partnership Service introduced the report and detailed the activities between April 2023 and March 2024. The report covered children safeguarding practice reviews, new referrals and the Board's priorities. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members requested clarity on the reasons behind the difference in contribution to the board by the partner authorities.
- Members noted that child protection orders had doubled and were advised that this had been due to a number of factors including the complexity of care and cost of living crisis.
- There had been an increased understanding of needs, and this has brought the number of children on protection plans had reduced to 272.
- Member were advised that this was a system that had been improving, and investment was difficult given the challenging financial situation.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee noted the activity undertaken by the Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board and its constituent members within the reporting period of April 2023 to March 2024.

The Committee also requested that Officers provide clarity on the reasons behind the difference in contribution to the board by the partner authorities.

38. ANNUAL CHILDRENS SERVICES COMPLAINT REPORT 2023-24

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the complaints and compliments for all of Children Services in 2023-24 both those following the statutory Children Social care complaints process and those that were considered under the councils corporate complaints process. These included both social care and Education complaints.

The Complaint Manager introduced the report and advised the complaints within the statutory process for children's services were on pages 101-111 and all other complaints were included on pages 112-115.

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

- Members noted that 58% of complaints were responded to within the permitted maximum timescale of 20 working days.

- Officers clarified that the preferred timescale was 10 days, and the statutory performance timescale was 20 days. The average response time was 17 days.
- The complainant would be made aware of all timescales.
- A stage 1 review of the complaint would be conducted within 10 days and this involved team managers contacting family or the young person to seek an early resolution.
- Members requested some examples of complaints and Officers advised that that would not be appropriate for public session.
- Officers were confident that decisions made were informed by assessment and determined by the relevant care plans.
- Members were advised that it was not unusual that families would ring their social worker and be unable to contact them, due to the nature of their role. Social workers would do their best to return calls but there can be some tension.
- There was an engagement piece with the communications team to set expectations with parents.
- Members noted that 32% of complaints were made by young people and CIC. The service had ensured that there were enough advocacy provisions for a young person to complaint when they want to.
- The process was meant to be for the young people and parents were offered the corporate complaints process if applicable.
- Members noted that the number of upheld complaints had increased and were advised that the number was comparative to the national figure.
- Members queried what learning was taken from complaints when they were upheld. The Officer advised that the first step was to ensure that the complaints outcomes were delivered and a quarterly report was submitted to Managers.
- An example was provided that several complaints referred to the lack of communication around placement moves and a policy change had happened to ensure that this did not happen again. The scale for young people to be communicated with had been brought forward and there had not been any complaints of this nature since then.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and made no recommendations for further scrutiny.

39. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PEER CHALLENGE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to an overview of the findings from the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge of Corporate Parenting, which took place on the 17th and 18th of July 2024. The review resulted in several recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of Corporate Parenting in Peterborough City Council

The Executive Director for Children and Young Peoples Services introduced the report and detailed the request for endorsement around moving Corporate Parent Committee to a board.

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

- Members requested that kinship carers be included as part of the board. Officers agreed and advised that the list included in the terms of reference were not exhaustive and additions would be added if identified.
- Members sought clarification on the main advantages of this move and were

advised that there would be more engagement from young people and increased involvement from stakeholders.

- The Local Government Association (LGA) have seen this model work elsewhere as it removes the formal nature of the meeting and the young people feel that they can share their thoughts more freely.
- Members were assured that the LGA would support the Council in the transition.
- Members were reminded that all Councillors were corporate parents.
- Members queried how the impact of the changes would be measured. Officers advised that there would be tracking and monitoring of progress, as well as an overarching improvement plan.
- Members expressed that the current format was well-run, effective and well-chaired.
- Officers advised that the proposed approach would create a more relaxed and engaging environment for the young people.

The following recommendation was proposed by Councillor Hemraj and seconded by Councillor Hillier, that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee recommended that Kinship Carers be included in the membership of the new Corporate Parenting Board. A vote was taken on the recommendation, and it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED**.

The following recommendation was proposed by Councillor Skibsted and seconded by Councillor Hemraj, that the Committee recommended that 12 months after implementation, a report is brought to the Committee that demonstrates the impact of the changes. A vote was taken on the recommendation, and it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED**.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee endorsed recommendation 12, namely, the move to Corporate Parenting Committee meetings being held in a non-public meeting, therefore removing it from the Council's Committee structure and political proportionality, and to enable full discussion and young people engagement and agreed to the new draft terms of reference to be sent to Constitution and Ethics Committee for recommendation onto Council for approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee recommended that Kinship Carers be included in the membership of the new Corporate Parenting Board.

The Committee also recommended that 12 months after implementation, a report is brought to the Committee that demonstrates the impact of the changes.

40. CONSTITUTION REVIEW – SCRUTINY PROPOSALS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the proposed changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Functions and Procedures within the Council's Constitution.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and key points raised included an increase to the number of meetings per year and various work streams that had supported the development of the proposals.

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

- Members were happy with the proposal for 6 meetings.
- Members sought clarification what training would be offered and were advised that it would be specific to each scrutiny committee, and it would also be offered to co-opted members.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee:

1. Reviewed and provided comment on the draft amendments to the Overview and Scrutiny Functions relating to their committee remit at appendix 1b.
2. Reviewed and provided comment on the draft amendments to the Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules at appendix 2b.
3. Approved that the Senior Democratic Services Officer in consultation with the Statutory Scrutiny Officer finalise the proposals and submit for approval to the Constitution and Ethics Committee.

41. MEETING START TIMES 2025-2026

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which looked at the start time for the municipal year 2025-2026 to ask the Committee to agree to a time.

Members of the committee unanimously agreed that the start time should remain at 6.00 pm for the municipal year 2025-26.

ACTION AGREED

The Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee RESOLVED to keep the start time for all Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee meetings for the Municipal Year 2025-26 at 6.00 pm.

42. WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which looked at the work programme for the municipal year 2024-2025 to determine the Committees priorities. Members were invited to make comments and suggestions.

- There were no comments.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee RESOLVED to note the work programme.

43. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as being the 17 March 2025.

CHAIR

Meeting started at 6.00pm and finished 19:26pm