

**Minutes of a meeting of the Employment Committee
held at the Town Hall, Peterborough on 15 September 2011**

Members Present: Councillors Benton (Chairman), Lamb (Vice Chairman), Holdich, Swift, Khan

Officers Present: Gillian Beasley, Chief Executive
Helen Edwards, Solicitor to the Council
Mike Kealey, Head of Human Resources
Gemma George, Senior Governance Officer
Karen S Dunleavy, Governance Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Seaton and Councillor Fitzgerald.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 July 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2011 were agreed as a true and accurate record subject to Councillor Khan being noted as being in attendance.

4. Appointment of Interim Director of Children's Services

The Employment Committee received a report from the Chief Executive on the action taken to appoint Adrian Loades, Director of Children's Services from Cambridgeshire County Council, as Interim Director of Children's Services for Peterborough City Council, with effect from 5 September 2011.

The report sought the agreement of the Committee to endorse the Authority's employment of Adrian Loades as Interim Director of Children's Services, thus ensuring that the Council maintained its statutory duty of s18 Children Act 2004.

Members were advised that Adrian Loades would work with Peterborough City Council on a secondment for around three months, and would be with the Authority for three days a week. The Assistant Director of Education & Resources, Jonathan Lewis would cover the remaining two days. Members were also advised that the Chief Executive was currently in discussions with an interim Director who was currently based at another authority. This Director specialised in the turnaround of failing departments, and had the support of Ofsted and DfE as a suitable appointment for Peterborough. His current assignment did not end until November 2011 and if the Chief Executive was able to secure his services, a report would be brought back to a further Employment Committee.

Members were advised by the Chief Executive that it was intended that the Interim Director of Children's Services, Adrian Loades would report his

findings to Members, Cabinet and Scrutiny on the work of the improvement team following the recent Ofsted inspection.

The following questions observations, comments were made by Members:

- Members sought clarification over the Ofsted report's findings regarding safeguarding children and what this meant for the role of Corporate Parents? *The Chief Executive advised Members that the Ofsted report showed that the work undertaken in relation to safeguarding children, through front line services, would require improvements. It was intended that the Improvement Team would work closely with those frontline services highlighted within the report, in order to introduce improvement measures. In the 2010 Ofsted report, the looked after children's service was given a good grading which reflects on the Council's corporate parenting role. Members were updated on the contribution made by the police, health and schools for safeguarding children, which had also been positively recognised in the recent Ofsted report. The focus for the new Interim Director of Children's Services would be to make improvements in the Contact Referral and Assessment Service (CRA) and to look at any other services supporting and working with CRA..*
- Councillor Holdich declared, for inclusion in the minutes, that he had been involved in the action taken by the Chief Executive, in his role as Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University.
- The Committee was advised that the matters arising from the recent Ofsted Inspection were to be dealt with, and plans were underway to take control of the situation. The Chief Executive advised Members that there were good members of staff within Children's Service and that the Interim Director of Children's Services would work alongside these staff members in order to help recover the service areas.
- Members sought clarification over why it had taken Children's Services a long time to recognise that some services provided were at a critical level, when they were aware of the problems a year ago? *In summary, the Chief Executive advised Members that the performance had appeared to have improved within Children's Services and that that the notice to improve had been due for removal at the end of March 2011. However, there had been a slip in performance during June and July 2011. The Interim Director of Children's services would work with service areas to improve them following diagnostic work to be done by the Sector-Led Improvement Team.*
- Members sought clarification as to whether the Authority was sure that the appointment of an Interim Director for three months was enough to guarantee improvements within the service, and whether this appointment was good practice? *The Chief Executive advised Members that the Interim Director of Children's Services was to be supported by Ann Goldsmith, Sector-Led Specialist who specialised in the field of child protection. Members were informed that the two posts would focus on work to improve on the safeguarding. The Assistant Director of Education & Resources would be working to support the remaining areas of Children's Services. Members were also advised that an independent audit had been requested to*

introduce a dip sampling system of the work through Children's Services to check the practice on child protection files.

- The Committee expressed concern over the criteria used in the referral of child abuse or neglect cases and whether the Council should undertake a review of this criteria.
- Members raised concerns about the process for referrals and the thresholds used for domestic violence. *The Chief Executive advised that there had been concerns raised with regards to the Contact, Referral and Assessment Service but that all parts of the services including domestic violence which had been highlighted in the Ofsted report, would need to be investigated and this would be the responsibility of the Interim Director for Children's Services and supported by the work of the Sector Led Improvement Team.*

RESOLVED:

The Employment Committee endorsed the action taken by the Chief Executive and approved the appointment of Adrian Loades, Director of Children's Services at Cambridgeshire County Council, as Interim Director of Children's Services for Peterborough City Council with effect from 5 September 2011.

Reasons for the decision:

The Council had a statutory responsibility to appoint an officer as Director of Children's Services, under s18 Children Act 2004.

Chairman
3.00pm – 3.20pm

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