

# Children's Services Overview Committee

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall,  
Colliton Park, Dorchester on 4 November 2013.

Present:

Michael Bevan (Chairman)

Dan Brember, Steve Butler, Mike Byatt, Barrie Cooper, Beryl Ezzard, Colin Jamieson, Susan Jefferies, Mike Lovell, Margaret Phipps and Daryl Turner.

Rebecca Knox, Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families, Toni Coombs, Cabinet Member for Education and Communications and John Wilson, Chairman of the Council, attended under Standing Order 54(1).

## Officers attending:

Helen Squibb (Deputy Director for Children's Services), Sian Dobson (Children's Services Group Finance Manager), Anne Salter (Head of Strategy Partnerships and Performance) and Rebecca Thomas (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

## The Following officers attended for certain items, as appropriate:

John Alexander (Policy and Performance Manager), Jim Chamberlain (Policy Manager, Adoption and Fostering), Les Gardner (Head of Early Intervention Services), Mark Loveys (Lead Advisor for School Improvement) and Chris Matthews (Business Partner, Children's Services).

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Children's Services Overview Committee to be held on **21 January 2014**.)

## **Apologies for Absence**

102. Apologies for absence were received from Pauline Batstone, Stephen Hill and Michael Turnbull.

## **Code of Conduct**

103. There were no declarations by members of any disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

## **Minutes**

104. The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2013 were confirmed and signed.

## **Matters Arising**

### Minute 68.3 - Children Missing from Care

105.1 An interim report on Children Missing from Care would be sent to Members by email within the next two weeks.

### Minute 72.5 - Time for Transformation Programme

105.2 An update on the Transformation Programme's impact across the Directorate would be given to members following the completion of Phase 3 of the Programme.

### Minute 74.2 - Peer Challenge on Domestic Violence

105.3 A member requested that reports brought before the Committee, as highlighted by the challenge team, detail local area mapping of need service provision to ensure members held as much information as possible. It was noted that information was

available and would be provided. In addition members could at any time request detailed information from the Directorate.

#### Minute 77 - Corporate Parenting – Strengthening the Role of Elected Members

105.4 The Governing Body for the Virtual School had been agreed and an update would be circulated to members.

#### Minute 79.5 - Universal Services

105.5 Dates in November and December 2013 had been set aside to meet with members in local areas to allow them to contribute to the consultation process. The Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families requested that officers be flexible with meeting arrangements to ensure full member involvement.

105.6 A member commented on the recently held members' seminar for Safeguarding and Total Respect (Children in Care) and asked that feedback be given to members, including the mechanisms in place to follow up concerns raised at the event. The Cabinet Members for Children's Safeguarding and Families, and Education and Communications advised that this would be considered at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel and that work in this area continued.

#### **Corporate Parenting Panel**

106.1 The Committee received the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings held on 4 July and 24 September 2013.

106.2 Members noted discussions were ongoing regarding the possible merger of the Children in Care/Care Leavers Board with the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families informed the Committee of the background to the possible merger and highlighted concern that only 5 members currently sat on the Corporate Parenting Panel.

106.3 The Committee considered the merger and this was generally supported. Consideration was then given to the size of any new group.

#### **Recommendation**

107. That the Cabinet agree that any new group arising from the merger of the Children in Care/Care Leavers Board and the Corporate Parenting Panel, comprise 7 members.

#### **Reason for Recommendation**

108. To ensure business is conducted practically and effectively, in line with best practice identified in corporate parenting guidance.

#### **Scoping Exercise to Consider the Creation of a Single Youth Offending Team across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole**

109.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that gave an overview of the functions, performance and nature of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and gave a summary of the current arrangements for the management of the YOTs in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. The report also outlined the outcomes of a recent scoping exercise to create a single YOT for the three areas and gave information on the next steps, jointly proposed by the YOT Management Boards.

109.2 Members noted that the steering group had discussed four broad models for change, based on national practices, guided by statute, and drawn from work being undertaken in other YOTs and from local changes to other services (Adult Learning). Agreement was being sought to continue to develop potential models.

109.3 Members voiced concerns that the creation of a single YOT could have a negative impact to the Dorset Partnership's performance ratings. Officers advised that the service would continue to be monitored at the same level as currently practiced, and they highlighted the benefits and flexibility that a larger service would give for the three areas.

109.4 In response to member's concerns that there was insufficient data on which to make an informed choice, officers advised that at this time, detailed information was unavailable. The steering group had agreed to undertake a greater analysis of the benefits, costs and risks of the preferred models, subject to the Committee's approval, and a more detailed report would be presented to the Committee once this additional scoping exercise was complete. Members requested that the Youth Offending Team Manager, be present to respond to questions at that time.

109.5 Clarification was given to the practical differences between the two preferred models that the steering group would model: a single YOT covering Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole with all staff employed by one partner; and a single YOT covering Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole hosted by one partner but all staff remain employed by home authority.

109.6 Members reiterated that they would have preferred a more detailed report and sought information regarding the proposed timescales and introduction of a single YOT. The Deputy Director for Children's Services advised that the three Councils would consider the steering group's report in January 2014. It was anticipated that the Committee's views would be considered by Dorset's Cabinet in January 2014, in order to move forward as soon as possible. A firm date would be given once all three YOT Management Boards had discussed the outcome of the steering group's scoping exercise.

109.7 Members noted that exploration of the two possible models for a pan-Dorset YOT would give a clearer indication of the benefits, costs, risk and efficiencies of a service operating across all three areas.

#### **Resolved**

110.1 That the next stage of work to develop more detailed models for a Pan-Dorset YOT be supported.

110.2 That option (b) A single YOT covering Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole hosted by one partner but all staff remain employed by home authority, be the indicative preference; although it was understood that this would need to be considered once the detailed modelling had been carried out by the steering group.

#### **New Framework for the Inspection of Local Authorities Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers**

111.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that outlined the new framework for the inspection of local authority services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers under Section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, published in October 2013.

111.2 The scope of the overall inspection and the proposed change of focus was summarised, demonstrating areas that would undergo detailed examination by Ofsted. The inspection process and the Ofsted judgement scale was also highlighted. Members noted the summary of the overall Local Authority Inspection judgements in relation to the period January 2013 – July 2013.

111.3 The Head of Strategy Partnerships and Performance clarified that the new framework continued to work on a single framework focusing on the local authority functions, but she asked members to note that from April 2015, partner Inspectorates would work

within a framework that additionally would evaluate the contribution of core statutory partners to the care and protection of children.

111.4 In response to members' questions, the Head of Strategy Partnerships and Performance advised that a whole series of detailed information was necessary to respond to Ofsted, therefore further reports would be brought before the Committee, including a timeline on the associated business plan to allow members to review the Directorate's progress against Ofsted's new framework. She added that by having a seat on the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, she could promote synergy with Health bodies across the County who had similar agendas.

111.5 In response to concerns raised in regards to the lack of qualitative measures placed against partner organisations's key responsibilities, officers advised that these would be built into the NHS report and form part of the business plan. All reports were to go through Children's Trusts and attending officers would be responsible for cascading information to relevant staff. The Head of Strategy Partnerships and Performance added that should Ofsted look at an individual child and order an inspection, this would be by way of a multiagency order and there would be an expectation for all partners to review and respond to that order.

111.6 Members discussed data sharing with key partners, and commented on the way in which data was used. Officers advised that following a peer review in the south west, the need to develop a quality assurance framework was recognised with the ambition to have fewer, more meaningful indicators.

### **Resolved**

112.1 That business planning arrangements for the inspection process be amended to reflect the newly published framework.

112.2 That information for the inspection process be categorised and populated on a website to ensure appropriate access for staff and members, as well as Inspectors.

112.3 That planning arrangements for identifying cases for tracking and sampling, including management and performance information be progressed as a matter of priority.

112.4 That partner organisations be informed of their key responsibilities.

112.5 That briefings for staff and members be provided in an accessible format and that planning begin for briefings in January 2014.

### **Annual Report of Dorset Safeguarding Children Board**

113.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that presented the Annual Report of the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) 2013 - 14. This illustrated the activity of the DSCB, including the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area, from April 2012 - March 2013 and set out the work programme for April 2013 - March 2014.

113.2 The Committee noted that the Board was a multi-agency statutory partnership and its report was written to engage with the public. The Chairman informed the Committee that Mr Cliff Turner was the Board's new Chairman.

113.3 In October 2013 Ofsted introduced a single inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and would soon be preparing for inspection of the effectiveness of Local Safeguarding Children Boards. The review and inspection of local authority services was to take place at the same time.

113.4 Members noted that a substantial element of the annual report reviewed previously undertaken activities and they asked that in future, there be greater member

engagement. In particular members asked that as a matter of practice hyperlinks be sent to them to keep them abreast of developments. Members also asked that local area data be included within future reports and any action points for 2013-2014 be made available.

113.5 A member asked whether information was available on children who had one parent in prison, as statistically there was 2.5 times more children in this category than those currently in care. Officers advised that details were not known, but the local authority had programmes in place to assist those working with these children.

### **Noted**

#### **Provisional Dorset Educational Results and Trends 2012/13**

114.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that provided an overview of outcomes at Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 for Dorset schools at the end of the school year 2012/13. This included comparative data, where available, and trends over time.

114.2 Members noted that performance evaluation at Key Stage 3 had now ceased but a new measure, the Pupil Premium Gap, was an increasingly important measure in relation to key vulnerable groups. This was used to gauge the difference in attainment and progress of some of Dorset's most disadvantaged pupils (free school meals, looked after and forces children) compared to their non pupil premium peers. Members requested a further report on the Pupil Premium Gap to better understand the new measure.

114.3 The Deputy Director for Children's Services highlighted the key results and advised that overall Dorset schools were performing well in Ofsted inspections. However performance might be affected by the introduction of Ofsted's new framework, as would schools nationally.

114.4 Members repeated earlier requests to receive information on their local areas in addition to other districts, to allow them to make comparisons and to recognise any links and trends/patterns. Reference was made to the report's far reaching implications such as pupil capacity, school transport applications, school standards etc. within the County Council.

### **Resolved**

115. That a report as set out in minute 114.2 be provided for consideration at a future meeting.

#### **Adoption Placements for Children in the Care of the County Council**

116.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services which advised members of the progress of children for whom a plan for adoption had been agreed by the County Council acting as an Adoption Agency during the last 6 months, 1 April to 30 September 2013.

116.2 Members noted that figures for the last 6 months were comparable to the last 2 to 3 years, however, due to further initiatives introduced by Government, there had recently been a higher level of activity. In total 7 children had been adopted in the last 6 months, with 17 children placed for adoption but not yet adopted. There were a further 14 children subject to Placement Orders and 3 children who were awaiting the outcome of Placement Order applications in Court. It was expected that at least 16 children would be adopted in the year 2013/14.

116.3 Following receipt of a Government one off ring fenced grant, officers were using this fund to prioritise the recruitment of adopters and support the adoption process.

Several joint initiatives were also ongoing, most significantly an event called “Adoption Activity Day” that involved children informally meeting approved adopters.

116.4 In response to a member's questions the Adoption and Fostering Policy Manager advised that sustainability of initiatives was considered prior to introduction and this had impacted upon the choice of activity. As a result of more robust planning arrangements, more babies were entering the system, and any delay between placement and adoption orders was often as a result of adopters requiring extra support.

### **Noted**

#### **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2013/14, Including MFC Update**

117.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which gave a projected overspend against service budgets for the County Council of £8,221.2k, as at the end of August 2013, and an update on the Meeting Future Challenges (MFC) Programme.

117.2 The Group Finance Manager informed members that at the time of writing the report the projected overspend on service budgets would be offset by the projected underspend on other central budgets of £5,854.5k, meaning a net projected overspend of £2,366.7k. This had now reduced to £2,000k due to the receipt of one off funding. The Directorate had been asked to find savings of £1.9M to meet the budget strategy and members noted that £1.2M had already been identified.

117.3 Members discussed the overspend in the Dorset Passenger Transport budget for special education needs/Children out of school. The Cabinet Member for Education and Communications advised that investigations were ongoing to establish why the costs had risen during the brief removal of the budget from Children's Services. Officers were actively looking at ways to reduce costs.

117.4 In response to a question, officers advised that there had been trends in out of county placement costs (for the last 2 years) but service needs had to be reviewed as a part of the whole Children's Services budget, strategy and priorities.

### **Noted**

#### **Corporate Performance Monitoring Report First Quarter 2013-14 (1 April - 30 June 2013)**

118.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which set out the results of the monitoring of the County Council's Budget and Corporate Plan for the first quarter of 2013-14.

118.2 The Policy and Performance Manager advised that consideration was being given to ensure members received more timely reports. A number of changes were proposed to include email updates to members and benchmarking against other service areas within the report. Members were encouraged to give their views and priorities for the next year's Corporate Plan.

118.3 The report was presented in detail. At the end of quarter one, 69% of indicators met or exceeded their targets. 85% of actions were reported to be on course or completed. For Aim 3, 77% of indicators were on target, with 90% of actions on course. The projected year-end overspend for the whole authority at the end of Quarter 2 was £437k, compared to £2,845.28k at the end of Quarter 1.

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118.4 Members advised that they wished to continue receiving data for other service areas, due to any possible impact on Children's Services, but asked that the focus of the report be upon Children's Services.

118.5 Once the Transformation Programme (phase 3) was completed, a member commented that it would be interesting to compare performance following the significant staffing level adjustments. The Head of Strategy Partnerships and Performance confirmed that performance outcomes were a very important part of the Transformation Programme's overarching aim, and she welcomed comments from members on performance areas that they wanted to be monitored.

### **Noted**

#### **Performance and Development Review Completion – 2013/14**

119.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that gave an overview of the percentage of Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) recorded as completed in DES across Children's Services and the County Council.

119.2 The recorded level of PDR completion rate across the Children's Services Directorate had seen an improvement during 2013/14 when compared to previous years, with 76.41% of PDRs being completed at the time of presenting the data to the Staffing Committee against 39.37% during 2012/13. Across the County Council as a whole, this compared to a reported completion rate of 73% of PDRs recorded as completed as at 9 August 2013, against 45% during 2012/13.

119.3 Previously managers had struggled with the PDR process and how to record PDR completion on the DES system. Changes to the PDR process and a concerted effort by managers to ensure PDRs were completed where-ever possible was directly attributed to the significant improvement.

119.4 Members commented on the target of 70% and voiced their wish for this to be set at 100%, with a physical exclusion of staff who were not present due to long term sickness, maternity leave or within the induction period. Members advised that they considered PDRs as a tool not only to support the individual but also to aid efficiency, and if not completed, this impacted on service delivery. Consideration was also given as to whether to include 'return to work' and 'exit' interviews within the process. The Deputy Director for Children's Services assured members that all managers were challenged to ensure PDRs were completed.

### **Noted**

#### **Policy Development Panels**

##### **Policy Development Panel on Children in Care**

120.1 The Committee received a short summary of the challenges overcome to convene a meeting of the Policy Development Panel. The Chairman confirmed the next meeting was to take place at 10.00am on Friday 15 November 2013.

120.2 The agenda was briefly reviewed and a member highlighted that the Panel should be member, rather than officer, led. Members asked that historical papers be made available to give newer members of the Panel a background to previous discussions.

120.3 The Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families advised that she was unable to attend and hear the Panel's discussions, but stated that the Panel should be member led.

**Noted****Establishment of future Policy Development Panels**

121.1 Members agreed to establish a Policy Development Panel on Universal Services. It was agreed that due to the importance of the subject, all members of the Council would be given the opportunity to take part in the work of the Panel. Members agreed that Group Leaders should nominate members, and also determine the size and political proportionality of the Panel. Group Leaders were to meet on 11 November 2013.

121.2 Members advised that the Panel's Terms of Reference would be discussed at the Panel's first meeting.

**Resolved**

122.1 That a Policy Development Panel be established in relation to Universal Services.

122.2 That Group Leaders be asked to determine the size and political proportionality of the Panel at their meeting on 11 November 2013.

122.3 That Group Leaders nominate members to the Panel from all members of the County Council.

122.4 That the Panel's Terms of Reference be agreed at the Panel's first meeting.

**Work Programme**

123.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which detailed the updated work programme for 2014.

123.2 A request to include a report on the number and initiatives to mitigate the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training was received. Members were asked to note that a regionally produced report was produced quarterly. This would be sent to members for their information.

123.3 Further items were to be added to the work programme as agreed at the meeting.

**Noted****Schedule of Member Seminars and Events 2013/2014**

124. The Committee received a schedule of forthcoming seminars and events arranged for members in 2013/2014.

**Member Briefings**

125. No subjects for future member briefings were identified.

**Noted****Questions**

126. No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20(2).

**Closing Remarks**

127.1 The Committee noted their dissatisfaction with the lack of authors present to respond to questions, and asked that in future authors be present to introduce their reports.

127.2 The Chairman informed members that the newly appointed Director for Children's Services, Sara Tough, would be present at the next meeting of the Committee.