

Children's Services Overview Committee

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall,
Colliton Park, Dorchester on 21 January 2014.

Present:

Michael Bevan (Chairman)

Pauline Batstone (Vice-Chairman)

Steve Butler, Mike Byatt, Barrie Cooper, Beryl Ezzard, Colin Jamieson, Mary Kahn, 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, Spencer Flower, Leader of the County Council and John Wilson, Chairman of the Council, attended under Standing Order 54(1).

William Trite, Chairman of the Adult and Community Services Overview Committee, attended under Standing Order 54(3)

Officers attending:

Sara Tough (Director for Children's Services), Helen Squibb (Head of Learning and Inclusion), Sian Dobson (Children's Services Group Finance Manager), Vanessa Glenn (Head of Family Support) and Rebecca Guest (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

The Following officers attended for certain items, as appropriate:

John Alexander (Policy and Performance Manager), Clive Hawkins (Youth Offending Team Manager) and Patrick Myers (Strategic Joint Commissioning Manager).

(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 **18 March 2014**.)

Chairman's Welcome

1. The Chairman welcomed Sara Tough, Director for Children's Services to her first meeting of the Children's Services Overview Committee.

Apologies for Absence

2. Apologies for absence were received from Dan Brember, Stephen Hill, Susan Jefferies and Michael Turnbull.

Code of Conduct

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

Minutes

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2013 were confirmed and signed.

Matters Arising

Minute 111.1 New Framework for the Inspection of Local Authorities Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers

5.1 A member commented that this was a good example of where officers should try to develop hyper links to the members' webpage to highlight where changes occurred (including legislative). An assurance was given by the Director for Children's Services that this would be progressed.

Minute 113.4 Annual Report of Dorset Safeguarding Children Board

5.2 Members reiterated the need for local area data to be included within reports by incorporating hyper links to the members' webpage to ensure sufficient evidence was provided to enable them to make informed decisions.

Minute 121.1 Establishment of future Policy Development Panels

5.3 The Chairman confirmed that the Policy Development Panel on Universal Services had been expedited to an Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) by the Cabinet. Members had been appointed and canvassed for a first meeting date. Members of the EAP that were present confirmed their availability for the afternoon of 10 February 2014. The Head of Family Support advised that she would be the lead officer and was able to attend from 1.00 p.m.

5.4 Members raised concern that the name of the EAP may confuse members of the public and asked that it be renamed the EAP on Children's Universal Services.

Recommended

6. That the Cabinet be asked to rename the Executive Advisory Panel on Universal Services as the Executive Advisory Panel on Children's Universal Services.

Reason for Recommendation

7. To simplify the purpose of the Executive Advisory Panel for members of the public.

Public ParticipationPublic Speaking

8.1 There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

8.2 There were no public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

Petitions

8.3 There were no petitions received in accordance with the County Council's petition scheme at this meeting.

The Dorset Learning Partnership: A new relationship between the Dorset County Council and Schools – progress update

9.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services which explained that the Dorset Learning Partnership was an innovative model of co-leadership between the local authority and schools, led by the new Dorset Learning Partnership Group, which aimed to reflect the changing national landscape for schools and local authorities within the government's vision of creating a self-improving school-led education system.

9.2 The Learning Partnership allowed schools, the local authority and the wider education community share a common vision for all Dorset's learners and work towards this vision through a dynamic new partnership that made maximum use of their combined leadership, skills and resources. The Head of Learning and Inclusion advised members that commitment was very strong and there was a genuine wish by all parties to work together.

9.3 The Partnership group reviewed Dorset's educational achievement data and drafted an action plan to address 5 priority issues that arose from the review. The action

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plan ran from January 2014 to July 2015 and would be finalised and agreed at the next Partnership meeting on 29 January 2014, before being circulated more widely. However members were asked to note that work was not limited to those detailed on the action plan.

9.4 Members noted that the local authority's overarching role was as a champion for every child and young person's safety, wellbeing and achievement. The biggest role change was in relation to 'ensuring the quality of educational provision' (often referred to as school improvement) as local authorities now had a more focused role. The local authority was accountable to Ofsted for the delivery of these school improvement functions. There was also an expectation from Ofsted that local authorities would have strategic plans for their partnership arrangements with schools.

9.5 In response to a member's question, the Head of Learning and Inclusion confirmed that the local authority would provide staff to carry out all the background work to support the schools. It was anticipated that the level of support would reduce in time, as schools became accustomed to their new roles. Clarification was also given to members on the mechanisms in place for the local authority to communicate with schools and how members and school governors alike could feed into the process. A member asked that this be a two way process and for the Committee to be kept abreast of discussions.

9.6 The Director for Children's Services stated that the Cabinet Member for Education and Communications had now been invited to attend policy/briefing meetings with schools as this had not been done previously. The move was welcomed by the Cabinet member and she advised that details of the Dorset Schools' Forum, including minutes of meetings, were available via www.dorsetforyou.com. The Forum was, however, constituted under the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.

9.7 In response to a member's question, officers confirmed that the Committee would receive regular updates as part of the review and monitoring arrangements that were in place. In addition the action plan and key areas would be discussed at each meeting of the Partnership group.

Noted

Draft Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2014-2016

10.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that illustrated the demographics and characteristics of children and young people in Dorset and identified how the County Council must continue to drive for greater cooperation and partnership working. The CYPP was the fourth refreshed Plan, and had refocused aims to take account of some of the imminent changes in the County Council's work for children and young people with additional needs. The Plan also recognised the importance of whole family working to improve children's outcomes.

10.2 The main purpose of the Plan was to draw together a number of other plans that were specific to particular organisations which contributed to the four broad aims of the Dorset Children's Trust and to consider the impact that such plans were having on the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Dorset. Work was continuing to identify the plans and to agree assessment and outcome criteria for specific age groups and cohorts.

10.3 Members highlighted the need to ensure that statistical data within the document was accurate, up to date and relevant. One member liked the themed part of the plan, but asked for greater use of the 'footer and header' section to reference on each page where the information was from. In addition, the story element of the Plan was observed as a table of statistics. The Strategic Joint Commissioning Manager advised that the final Plan would be web-based and could be updated annually. It mirrored the Corporate Plan, but as

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some of the data was only updated annually, time lags could occur. Officers would therefore consider the usefulness of the data and remove it where applicable. The Director for Children's Services advised that officers would review the different ways in which the story of children and young people in Dorset could be presented. Hyper links would also be made available to add data without bulking out the content of the report.

10.4 A member recognised the difficulty of trying to capture multiple needs in one document and questioned how the Plan would link and work effectively with other bodies, such as the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board. Officers confirmed that the CCG had a representative on the Dorset Children's Trust Board who were accountable to the Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board. Members commented on the complexity of the subject due to the number of bodies involved and asked if this could be simplified or demonstrated within a matrix. A glossary of terms was also suggested.

10.5 A member called for caution regarding funding arrangements as data from other bodies were collated and priorities driven in different ways. The Strategic Joint Commissioning Manager confirmed that there was an ambition for a joint strategic needs assessment to be carried out for groups of young people to influence future activity. In addition, he confirmed that a joint Pan Dorset plan was needed to address funding implications and how the Plan would fit with Bournemouth and Poole, the Joint Public Health Board and Health and Wellbeing Boards. It was recognised however, that all groups considered similar issues.

10.6 Further information was requested to outline why children and young people who achieved less well and received extra support to help them catch up in their learning and lives, had not shown improvements in their achievement.

10.7 In response to a question the Strategic Joint Commissioning Manager confirmed that the CYPP was to be reviewed by the County Council's communications team to consider the use of plain English.

10.8 The Director for Children's Services reminded members that the CYPP's purpose was to encourage all partners to work as one, share systems and reduce duplication. In particular there was a need to simplify the process for families and attempt greater integration.

Resolved

11. That the committee's comments as set out above, be noted.

Bovington Middle School – Retention and re-use of premises

12.1 The Director for Children's Services suggested that as the proposals needed to be considered by both the Property Management Group and the Assessment Management Group, that the report be deferred.

12.2 The Chairman informed Members that the local member for Edgon Heath agreed with the further consultation and recognised the potential wider use of the building and asked to speak when the matter was reconsidered.

Resolved

13. That the report be deferred to allow further consultation.

Proposal for Pan-Dorset Youth Offending Team

14.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that updated members on the work carried out to explore the potential to establish a single Youth Offending Team (YOT) across Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole. The report also set

out the current management arrangements of the two teams, reported how the pan-Dorset work was being governed and highlighted the issues being considered by the Steering Group. A broad time frame for the process was given.

14.2 The Youth Offending Team Manager advised members that the report gave headline details but more work was to be carried out. He asked members to recognise the complexity of working across three local authorities and stated that a budget reduction of 10% was anticipated in the coming year.

14.3 Members supported the initiative but acknowledged the challenging task and in particular the creation of a single case management system across both current teams. Concerns were expressed about the creation of a single YOT as it could result in funds (and subsequently services) being directed away from the County Council as other areas had greater challenges to overcome. The Youth Offending Team Manager reassured members, that the County Council, under current plans, would actually benefit. However, it would be necessary for resources to be made available for priority areas.

14.4 In response to a question, the Youth Offending Team Manager confirmed that the target date for formal implementation of the single YOT (1 April 2015) was realistic, subject to local authorities agreeing upon an employment model. Clarification was given on the separate models and members noted that each local authority was to complete a cost benefit analysis before a decision was made. Members asked that examples across the county be used for comparison purposes.

14.5 The Head of Family Support advised members that she would be lead officer from 1 April 2014 and she was confident that a single YOT could be achieved by 1 April 2015. Currently an analysis of needs across wider Dorset was being carried out to obtain specific evidence, and it was likely that there would be common themes across the three authorities.

Noted

Children's Services Time for Transformation Programme – Progress update

15.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that updated members on the Time for Transformation (TfT) programme being implemented within the Children's Services Directorate. The Committee had considered the matter at a meeting on 2 July 2013.

15.2 The Head of Learning and Inclusion advised members that phase 1 of the programme was now complete and phase 2 was drawing to a close. Ten new managers had been appointed and taken up their posts on 1 January 2014. These managers were currently in a transition phase which would be fully completed by April 2014. The current phase of the TfT programme (phase 3) related to reconfiguring services into 9 new service areas, with a streamlined management structure and greater integration of service delivery. Full implementation was planned for April 2014, although the interim changes had already been put in place. It was anticipated that further changes would follow after April 2014, with phase 4 resulting in savings of approximately £1m. Once the new structure was embedded, a review would be undertaken to consider further efficiencies.

15.3 The Director for Children's Services confirmed that before any additional phases were implemented, a report would be presented to the Committee for consideration. She highlighted the positive impact on innovation and change, and that the redesign of management responsibility invited integration with other directorates. Confirmation was then given that Phases 4 and 5 would be carried out over the next 2 years and would impact

on the way the Directorate engaged with children and families. This would necessitate consideration of staff development.

15.4 In response to a question, officers detailed the recruitment process used and gave members assurances that rigour had been applied so that the best people were recruited to take the Directorate forward. Staff had been reallocated based on the skills so were utilised to the greatest effect. An external recruitment exercise might be needed, but had not been necessary to date.

15.5 Members sought clarification regarding the revised integrated management structure, in particular to the division of the Family Support service into three regional areas. The Head of Family Support advised that discussions were ongoing to establish the boundaries and there was potential for future change.

15.6 The Cabinet Member for Education and Communications highlighted that the report did not contain detailed budget information and the need to reduce posts. As a result staff would be leaving the Authority, but the best staff with the best skills would be retained. She reiterated the Director's comments that, should internal recruitment fail, an external recruitment exercise would be undertaken.

Resolved

16. That the report be noted and the direction of travel supported.

Dorset Carers' Strategy 2014-16

17.1 The Committee considered a joint report by the Director for Adult and Community Services and the Director for Children's Services that set out what the NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group and Dorset County Council wanted to achieve for carers via the Dorset Carers' Strategy 2014-16.

17.2 The Dorset Carers' Strategy and action plan was structured around four key areas for carers' support, with an additional area, young carers, added to acknowledge the overlap with the County Council Children's Services support for under 18s supporting family members.

17.3 On 7 October 2013 the Adult and Community Overview Committee had considered the Dorset Carers Strategy 2014-16 and asked for additional information to be provided on support for Young Carers and the role of the Dorset Partnership for Older People Programme (POPP). Sections covering these two areas had now been included.

17.4 Members noted that as part of the consultation, young carers had highlighted a lack of understanding received from other professionals and organisations, particularly schools, even after they had been identified as a young carer. As a result, a number of recommendations were contained within the report including the appointment of a Champion at a senior level to ensure young carers' views and experiences were heard at a senior level.

17.5 Members voiced their appreciation that the young carers element of the strategy had been enhanced but commented that the exact number of young carers was unknown as not all wanted to come forward. Members asked that officers promote the recommendations given within the strategy but asked how these would be monitored. The Strategic Joint Commissioning Manager confirmed that monitoring reports would be provided for the Committee. In addition, the Children's Commissioning Board would monitor the plan and the Dorset Children's Trust Board would circulate information to its appointed Champion.

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17.6 Members commented on the difficulties faced by young carers and the need to assist them to ensure their integration into society and that they enjoyed the same opportunities as their peers. The challenge of encouraging young carers to come forward was discussed and it was suggested that better use be made of partners, with a small financial reward, as it was recognised that young people would be less resistant to approaching these bodies rather than contacting the County Council.

17.7 The Chairman of the County Council advised that he and the Cabinet Member for Education and Communications had recently attended a Rotary Club where the subject of supporting children had been discussed. He referred to a number of ways in which support could be offered and that these should be encouraged with schools within the county.

Resolved

18. That the strategy and action plan be noted.

Recommended

19. That the Cabinet be asked to endorse the strategy and action plan, as a basis for developing carers' support over the next three years.

Reason for Recommendation

20. The service contributed to the County Council's aim to protect and enrich the health and wellbeing of Dorset's most vulnerable adults and children.

Corporate Performance Monitoring Report Second Quarter 2013-14 (1 July – 30 September 2013)

21.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services which set out the results of the monitoring of the County Council's Budget and Corporate Plan for the second quarter of 2013-14 and presented the Corporate Balanced Scorecard.

21.2 The report was presented in detail. At the end of quarter two, 63% of indicators met or exceeded their targets, and 67% of actions were reported to be on course or completed. For Aim 3 of the plan (Support and encourage Dorset's children to reach their full potential and protect those who are most vulnerable), the average performance indicator score was "Green", and the projected year end budget was rated as "Amber" with a projected overspend of £2,797.86k (4.95%), with 71% of actions on course.

21.3 The Director for Children's Services stated the report format was being reviewed to make it more detailed and relevant to the Directorate. She recognised that solely listing percentage figures wasn't always helpful and of the need for more meaningful commentary.

21.4 Members noted that performance indicator CH 01 (Failure to keep children safe that are known to, or in the care, of DCC) was underperforming due to the number of repeat referrals. An audit was scheduled to establish the reasons for this. The Policy and Performance Manager advised that current figures confirmed that improvements had been made in this area as the actual figure had reduced from 9.1% to 8.9%. In addition he confirmed that the performance indicator was subject to wide variations as it dealt with small numbers of children.

Noted

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2013/14, including Forward Together (Residual Meeting Future Challenges (MFC) update)

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22.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which gave a forecast overspend against service budgets for the County Council of £5,665k, compared to £8,205k at the end of August 2013, and an update on the Forward Together (residual Meeting Future Challenges Programme).

22.2 The Group Finance Manager highlighted that the Children and Families budget had been increased by one off funding of £8k. There was, however, a forecast overspend on this budget (£2,712k) as a result of the increase in the number of children in care.

22.3 The Dorset Passenger Transport budget for special educational needs/Children out of school remained over budget and both the Children's Services and Environmental Services Directorates were continuing to work together to address the overspend, although it was expected to continue in 2013/14. In response to a member's question, the Director for Children's Services confirmed that transport costs had been identified as a corporate issue and a holistic review across the authority was being carried out.

22.4 The Head of Learning and Inclusion confirmed two projects (schools coordinating transport locally and improving the availability of management data) had commenced and were anticipated to contribute to reducing the overspend. These included a review of all high cost single person travel arrangements and the use of taxis.

22.5 Members noted that although schools were coordinating transport locally, they were made aware of the County Council's budget and strategies. In response to a member's question, further clarification was given regarding the allocation of funding per child and it was highlighted that this was government led.

Noted

Policy Development Panels

Policy Development Panel in relation to Children in Care

23.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources that advised members that at its meeting on 15 November 2013, the Policy Development Panel in relation to Children in Care for its terms of reference to be amended.

23.2 The initial purpose of the Panel was to undertake a specific piece of work relating to the increasing number of children in care and the cost implications this had for the County Council in Dorset. The Panel wished its Terms of Reference be amended to better reflect this, and to address changes to the Children's Services Directorate as a result of the transformation programme.

Resolved

24. That the proposed amended Terms of Reference of the Policy Development Panel in relation to Children in Care be agreed.

Revenue Budget 2014/15

25.1 The Committee considered a joint report by the Director for Corporate Resources and the Director for Children's Services which set out a summary of the key issues within the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and the impact of the settlement on the budget strategy for Dorset County Council. The report also outlined the implications of the budget strategy on the Children's Services Directorate for consideration and comment. The final settlement was expected by early February and was the first year of a two year settlement covering 2014/15 and 2015/16.

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25.2 The budget in the current year had an underlying overspend of approximately £2.6-2.7m in relation to the increased number of children in care (£2.1m independent sector placements and £0.6m fostering and adoption). This had not been addressed as part of the budget strategy but would form an area for review under the Council's Forward Together Programme.

25.3 A residual budget gap of approximately £1M remained for 2014/15. However further savings were anticipated in 2015/16 from four key areas: The review of universal services (£1m); the full year effect of the review of business and administration (£75k); Phase 4 of time for transformation (£250k); and further trading targets (£100k).

25.4 Members were advised that a more detailed budget report has been presented to the Schools Forum on Friday 17 January 2014.

Noted

Policy Development Panels

To consider possible topics for work by Policy Development Panels

26. No topics for future Policy Development Panels were identified.

Work Programme

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

27.2 Further items were to be added to the work programme as agreed at the meeting. The Senior Democratic Services Officer reminded members that at their meeting on 14 February 2013, the County Council had agreed that reports with a recommendation 'to note' (and by association 'for information') be made available to members by email or by use of member briefing sessions, and not as part of the formal agenda. This was to enable the Committee to concentrate on items requiring members' action and/or resolution.

Noted

Schedule of Member Seminars and Events 2014

28. The Committee received a schedule of forthcoming seminars and events arranged for members in 2014. Both the Chairman and Cabinet Member for Education and Communications encouraged members to attend the seminars.

Noted

Member Briefings

29. No subjects for future member briefings were identified.

Outside Bodies

30.1 The local member for Verwood and Three Legged Cross and Cabinet Member for Education and Communications, gave members a resumé of the two outside bodies on which she sat: the Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education and the Schools Forum.

30.2 The benefits of both these bodies were commented upon, in particular the opportunity to work with the Diocese and increase partnership links.

Questions

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

Adoption Placement Tables

32.1 The Director for Children's Services advised members that the County Council had scored well in recently published adoption placement tables where councils were ranked on the time between a child entering care and moving in with an adoptive family, and the time between a local authority receiving court permission to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family.

32.2 Out of 152 local authorities, the County Council ranked 8th for the time it took for a child going into care to move in with a family, and 15th for the time between receiving court permission to place a child and the Council deciding on a match. Mr Edward Timpson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Education wished to send officials to Dorset to understand how this success had been achieved.

Meeting Duration: 10:00am – 12:35 pm