

## Children's Services Overview Committee

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall,  
Colliton Park, Dorchester on 18 January 2016.

### Present:

Michael Bevan (Chairman)  
Pauline Batstone (Vice-Chairman)  
Steve Butler, Mike Byatt, Barrie Cooper, Beryl Ezzard, Peter Hall, Susan Jefferies,  
Paul Kimber, Mike Lovell and Daryl Turner.

Toni Coombs (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Peter Finney (Cabinet Member for Environment), Robert Gould (Leader) and Rebecca Knox (Cabinet Member for Communities, Health and Wellbeing) attended under Standing Order 54(1).

Spencer Flower attended under Standing Order 54(3).

### Officers attending:

Sara Tough (Director for Children's Services), Vanessa Glenn (Head of Family Support), Phil Minns (Head of Learning and Inclusion), Anne Salter (Head of Strategy, Partnership and Performance), Tom Wilkinson (Children's Services Group Finance Manager) and Rebecca Guest (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

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

Gary Binstead (Strategy, Partnerships and Performance Service Manager), Ed Denham (School Admissions Manager), Jackie Groves (Learning and Inclusion Service Manager), Tracy Long (Library Service Manager), Claire Shiels (Commissioning and Procurement Manager) and David Trotter (Senior Assurance Officer, Corporate Development).

(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 **15 March 2016**.)

### **Apologies for Absence**

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mary Kahn, Margaret Phipps and Michael Turnbull.

### **Code of Conduct**

2. There were no declarations by members of any personal or prejudicial interests under the Code of Conduct.

### **Minutes**

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2015 were confirmed and signed.

### **Matters Arising**

#### Minute 122.3 – Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16

4. The Committee were advised that the work on going to recruit new staff and reduce agency spend was to be addressed as part of the updated revenue budget monitoring report later on the agenda.

### **Corporate Parenting Board**

5.1 The Committee received the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on 24 September 2015.

5.2 Members were informed that the Care Leavers' Charter would be presented to the Committee at its meeting on 15 March 2016.

5.3 The Committee received an update on the activity taken following the Member Champion Workshop in November 2015 and the subsequent report to be presented to the Board.

### **Noted**

### **Public Participation**

#### **Public Speaking**

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

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

#### **Petition**

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

### **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16**

8.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer which set out the budget monitoring information as at the end of November 2015. The information showed an overall forecast overspend against service budgets for the County Council of £5.051k. The overspend on service budgets would be offset by an underspend on Central Budgets of £2,050k meaning a total forecast overspend of £3,001k for the County Council. The improved position on Central Budgets was due to a review of the County Council's minimum revenue provision policy, which had released £2.6m.

8.2 The Children's Services forecast overspend had increased from £2.150m, reported in October 2015, to £3.537m mainly because of the number of children who were taken into care increasing from 407 in August to 447 as at the end of November 2015. The figure was now at 464 and expected to peak in spring 2016 at around 500 before reducing to a long term average of around 400. The Head of Family Support assured the Committee that this was due to a robust governance procedure that enabled a strong focus on safeguarding children. She advised that the challenge for the service was to manage the flow of children through the process and to ensure that they found safe homes in which to reside long-term.

8.3 In response to members' concerns regarding the projected overspend on agency staff, the Committee was informed that this would be partially offset by £0.8m of vacancy savings. Details of the proactive work undertaken to reduce this spend was given and members were advised that a proactive recruitment campaign was yielding positive results. It was anticipated that just 2-3 agency posts would exist after 1 April 2016. Previously 27 agency posts existed, which was low in comparison with other local authorities, however the cost was 60% more expensive than permanent authority staff. Officers agreed to provide members with a monthly update on agency posts.

8.4 Members congratulated officers for their hard work in reducing the Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport costs from an overspend during the last financial year of almost £700k to an anticipated underspend of around £375k.

8.5 The Group Finance Manager reviewed the Early Years budgets and explained that the Nursery Education Grant budget was a flat rate government fund, paid in arrears following voluntary school placements. The School Budget Forum had met on 15 January 2016 and agreed the underspend would be put towards special educational needs in the next financial year.

**Noted**

**Revenue Budget 2016/17**

9.1 The Committee considered a joint report by the Chief Financial Officer and the Director for Children's Services that summarised 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 by members.

9.2 The Group Finance Manager reviewed the disappointing settlement and funding gap of around £7.7m in 2016/2017 for Dorset County Council. Further to the earlier discussions on the number of children in care, he advised that an additional £5m of one-off funding had been identified to allow time to reduce the number of children in care to a sustainable position of around 400 children. In addition, Children's Services had identified £2.765m of savings and efficiencies for 2016/17 and a further £2.875m for 2017/18.

9.3 The Director outlined potential income streams in response to members' questions, in particular the possibility of expanding the successful work at The Cherries Residential Care Home. However, this was a long term strategy.

9.4 Reference was made to the appendices that illustrated both growth funding and saving proposals, together with efficiency options for 2016/17 and 2017/18 but members were advised that these were compiled pre settlement announcement. Both the Chief Executive and Leader had lobbied Government and MPs and an announcement was expected on 3 February 2016. Both the Cabinet and County Council meetings in February 2016 had been deferred to enable reflection and a response to the announcement.

9.5 The Chairman invited the Leader to speak at the meeting, who outlined the challenging settlement. He informed the Committee that a strong case had been given to MPs, who had all been sympathetic. A new methodology had been used by Government to arrive at the provisional settlement which had not been consulted upon and he believed that there were reasonable grounds for Dorset to receive transitional funds. If unsuccessful, there was an alternative budget that incorporated one-off short-term measures. Following years would have to be urgently reviewed and time allowed for consultation. He emphasised that knee jerk reactions to events would be avoided. Members were invited to attend a drop-in session to discuss the budget on 2 February 2016.

**Noted**

**Education Performance and Pupil Premium Gap**

10.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that illustrated the performance of children and young people in Dorset, and how the most disadvantaged children compared with the majority of children. Available comparative data was given together with the challenges for the service in Dorset.

10.2 Members noted that performance for Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 1 Phonics, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4 was in line with national and statistical neighbours' results. However Key Stage 2 was overall below national standards and needed to be

improved, especially in regards to maths and attainment at the higher levels. Performance of children receiving free school meals remained below expectation and needed to continue to improve.

10.3 The Head of Learning and Inclusion informed members of the service's role in improving performance and highlighted that while officers liaised with schools to strengthen any improvement plans, it was for the schools themselves to determine how to deliver any plans and the focus of any specific areas.

10.4 Officers responded to a number of questions and members were advised that academy schools did not perform better than grant maintained schools, transferring schools part way through the year did initially impact on performance, but only for a short time, and that there was national guidance to target children in receipt of free school meals to help them progress. In regards to the later, these schools also received additional funding for these children.

### **Resolved**

11. That the work of the Dorset School Improvement Partnership be supported.

### **Corporate Performance Monitoring Report Second Quarter 2015-16 (1 July – 30 September 2015)**

12.1 The Committee considered a joint report by the Chief Executive and Director for Children's Services that presented the results of the monitoring of the Corporate Balanced Scorecard, including the Corporate Plan, for the second quarter of 2015-16. The Plan and Scorecard was the principle means by which the County Council monitored high priority performance measures on customer service, staff development and wellbeing.

12.2 The Policy and Performance Officer highlighted the headline issues contained within the report. The Director referred to an erroneous news article in The Echo on 16 January 2016 and she explained that both performance indicator figures were positive. She had asked that a statement issued to The Echo be printed to illustrate their misinterpretation of the data. In relation to the number of children assessed as being subject to emotional abuse and/or domestic violence, this indicated that officers were actively identifying children in need and increasing numbers was a national trend. In regards to the percentage of children subject to a child protection plan for more than 2 years, she advised that this figure was only reported when the plan was closed. The high number therefore indicated the high number of plans that were closed within the second quarter and she indicated that the projected figures over the course of the year were still on target.

12.3 Officers had previously referred to a revised approach to corporate and service planning and performance management through an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach. This had now been signed off by the Corporate Leadership Team and welcomed by the Forward Together Board. The OBA approach would significantly impact on how performance was reported with a focus on two types of accountability: population and performance. Members were asked to consider and comment on the new reporting formats. The revised approach received a positive response from the Committee and clearer live information reports were welcomed.

12.4 In considering the new reporting style, a member asked that a curve be placed on the straight line graph and that other committees be made fully aware of the data relating to Children's Services.

12.5 A member asked for recognition that the transformation agenda would not take place overnight and risks would remain in the future. It was important to consider the outcome for children and how key challenges would impact on services. The Director confirmed that the whole transformation plan was about prevention. This was a cultural shift and needed to be included in reports and discussions at committees. She believed the service review was on track and the four year plan would reduce numbers of children in care.

#### **Resolved**

13. That the Children's Services Overview Committee welcomed the new Outcomes Based Accountability Concept Report Scorecard, but asked that curves be added to the straight line graphs for additional clarity.

#### **Reason for Decision**

14. To ensure members were aware of the County Council's performance against the 2015-16 Corporate Plan and Corporate Balanced Scorecard.

### **Economic Growth and the Link to Young People's Development**

15.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that responded to members' requests for assurances that children leaving education were prepared for the workforce and that they could access the learning and employment opportunities of their choice at a local level. The report aimed to inform on the links between economic growth and young people's development and to highlight the challenges in Dorset.

15.2 In response to a question, the Head of Learning and Inclusion advised that a survey had been undertaken to establish why there was a static number in the take up of apprenticeships in Dorset. This suggested that transport was a big issue and could lead to young people leaving Dorset. In addition, the Learning and Inclusion Service Manager stated that the study indicated that as courses progressed some youths believed they did not have the skills or support for the transition from AS to A level and dropped out at this stage.

15.3 A member highlighted that work by Children's Services sat alongside the economic agenda and within a changing landscape. He asked members and officers to be aware that work had to be taken in conjunction with others, such as the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Strategies had to be linked both internally and externally to ensure joined up thinking. He emphasised that access, isolation, connectivity and transport were all key factors to enabling young people to make the right choices. The Head of Learning and Inclusion advised that he had just joined the Employment and Skills Board of the LEP and he hoped to influence providers in this role.

15.4 Concerns regarding transport did not come under the remit of Children's Services, however the Holistic Transport Review indicated that transport was not always an issue and the Head of Learning and Inclusion confirmed that Dorset met the national view that schools and colleges be accessible within a 25 mile radius. Technology made some courses accessible on-line and therefore broadband connectivity was equally as important as transport for young people to access learning. Officers confirmed the use of an on-line service called 'Connexions' for young people, however some members did not believe that young people would use this or Dorsetforyou.com and they asked officers to greater challenge themselves by using modern technology more to influence, communicate and teach young people.

#### **Noted**

**Admissions Arrangements 2017-2018 and Transport Policy 2016-2017**

16.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that summarised the consultations that had taken place on changes to school admission arrangements and invited members to recommend approval of changes to the Cabinet in order to meet the Local Authority's statutory requirements.

16.2 In addition to the determination of admissions arrangements, the report also updated the existing Home to School Transport and the Post 16 Transport Support Policy that would come into effect for September 2016. The Committee was also asked to note the outcome of a consultation on the decrease in Pupil Admissions Number at The Thomas Hardye School, the admissions arrangements at the Wimborne Multi Academy Trust (MAT) and other areas of change that 'own admission authorities' were consulting upon. Members were informed that in regards to the report's recommendations, the Cabinet did not need to note the outcome of the consultation.

16.3 Members considered the report and asked that future reports to the Committee gave a summary sheet of any amendments to Policies.

16.4 The School Admissions Manager highlighted that the Post 16 Transport Policy to young people with Special Educational Needs/Learning Difficulties (SEN/D) was suspended for the academic year starting September 2014. It was now proposed that the cost recovery for seats be implemented from the academic year 2016-2017, as permitted within the legislation. However students with SEN/D aged 18-25 years, under current legislation, had a right to free of charge transport. Members also noted that many young people with SEN/D would qualify for the 50% discount on a surplus seat cost, where they complied with the terms and conditions of such a discount in section 2.3 of the Post 16 Transport Support Policy. Parents would also qualify for support from the Department of Work and Pensions for any child with a disability to help them meet any additional costs.

16.5 Members raised some concerns that this would impact on families and the choices made by young people, particularly those living in rural areas. Officers advised the suggested changes had been raised with groups and they had accepted that costs should be comparable. Changes were not expected to impact or get in the way of learning but to offer a level playing field for all students. Other authorities had already implemented charges of this nature.

16.6 The Committee considered the options proposed within the report and were asked by the Director to consider the principles of introducing these charges over either a short, medium or long term. Members discussed the impact of the charges after the recession but recognised that this would give equality to all students regarding transportation costs. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People also spoke to the Committee to remind them of the financial decisions taken to reduce surplus seats, of the Authority's statutory responsibility and of the budget considerations to be taken by the Authority.

16.7 Councillor Cooper proposed that increases in the surplus seat costs be staggered as per option 'c' in the report, namely an increase in September 2016 to £510, to £575 in September 2017, to £640 in September 2018, to £705 in September 2019 and to £770 in September 2020. This was seconded by Councillor Ezzard. By a show of hands, with the Chairman using his casting vote, the proposal fell.

16.8 Councillor Batstone then proposed that the increases be staged as per option 'a' in the report, namely an increase in September 2016 to £510, to £640 in September 2017 and to £770 in September 2018. This was seconded by Councillor Butler. By a show of hands, with the Chairman using his casting vote, the proposal was carried.

**Resolved**

17. That the consultation that took place on behalf of the Wimborne MAT with the intention of changing their admissions arrangements to prioritise children from Trust First Schools for places in Trust Middle Schools be noted.

**Recommendation**

18. That the Cabinet be recommended to adopt the following:

- (a) Dorset County Council Admissions Arrangements including the Co-Ordinated Scheme, the Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2017-2018, the In-Year Fair Access Policy 2017-2018, the Admission of Armed Forces Community Children Policy and the Guidance on the Placement of a Pupil Outside His or Her Normal Age Group, the 6th Form Admissions Policy and the Nursery Admissions Policy.
- (b) The Home to School Transport Entitlement Policy for Children Attending Mainstream School 2016-2017 and the Dorset Post 16 Transport Support Policy for 2016-2017 which included a rise in the surplus seat price from £485 to £510 and a proposal for reaching full cost recovery. The full cost recovery be recommended to be progressed in accordance with option 'a' within the report, namely an increase in September 2016 to £510, to £640 in September 2017 and to £770 in September 2018.
- (c) The Cabinet are specifically asked to agree to the extension of the Post 16 charge to young people with SEN/D accessing Post 16 education.
- (d) Changes to the Pupil Admissions Number for Thomas Hardy School, reducing from 475 to 450.

**Reasons for Recommendation**

19.1 To determine admissions arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements including the Schools Admissions Code December 2014.

19.2 To ensure compliance with the latest legislation and subsequent regulation/statutory guidance.

**Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health**

20.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that set out the progress made in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs) following a review commissioned by the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). It provided an update on the development of local Transformation Plans and the assurance of additional funding for mental health services for children and young people. An update of progress on the development of a new pan-Dorset Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy was also provided.

20.2 The Commissioning and Procurement Manager highlighted the headline challenges contained within the report and actions taken by officers to address these. Members noted that there was a reduced number of young people not attending appointments, which had subsequently freed up waiting times. This did however require further work to understand why appointments were being missed. More work around communications to ensure all referrals were necessary and how services supported professionals in other areas (such as teachers) was also required. Members were informed that the elements of the report, such as the Strategy, were presented to the Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board.

20.3 The Transformation Plan identified areas that could be addressed within existing resources as well as those that required additional funding. New funding for the

Dorset CCG area now totalled £1,551,573. Money would be used to target a range of issues including crisis care, improvement and development in behaviours such as an autism

spectrum disorder (ASD) and an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), improvements in and support to schools and the School Nursing Service and Children's Centres, and investment to improve access to psychotherapy. Progress against the plan was to be monitored by the CCG and NHS England.

20.4 Councillor Bevan, as the Member Champion for Mental Health Services, commented on the areas that needed improvement, as detailed within the report, and he asked that all be acted upon, including the issue of bullying, which the report suggested was at high levels within Dorset. A member stated that he would like to see the Authority have more input with schools to tackle bullying. Officers acknowledged the many areas to address and that these were being done by numerous people through various strategies. The challenge was to ascertain who was best placed to address each one.

20.5 In response to the question regarding the impact of youth services changes to youth workers within schools, officers confirmed they had many excellent examples of best practice and there were successful youth worker models available. The challenge was to achieve consistency across Dorset. Dorset County Council staff would form part of a multi-disciplinary team within communities to give support and also signpost people to other forms of support where necessary.

20.6 The pan-Dorset Strategy would bring together all associated local service development, improvement and action plans across partner organisations and was currently being developed for 2016-2020. Following consideration by the Pan Dorset Joint Commissioning Partnership for Children and Young People in January 2016, a consultation exercise would commence and it was anticipated that the final Strategy would be published in April 2016. The implementation plan would also be published in 2016 and updated to reflect progress.

20.7 Members welcomed the report, but due to the complexity and its length stated they would find it helpful to also receive a succinct overview in the future.

#### **Resolved**

21. That the Committee noted the Local Transformation Plan and Dorset Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy but asked that all areas for improvement and implementation be acted upon, and that bullying be added to this list.

#### **Reason for Decision**

22. The emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people was a local, regional and national priority.

#### **Work Programme**

23.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which detailed the updated work programme for 2016 and were asked to request additional items through the Chairman.

23.2 Additional items to be added to the work programme were set out in minute number 5.2.

#### **Noted**



**Schedule of Councillor Seminars and Events 2016**

24. The Committee received a schedule of forthcoming seminars and events arranged for councillors in 2016.

**Noted****Councillor Briefings**

25. No subjects for future councillor briefings were identified.

**Outside Bodies and Member Champions**

26.1 Councillor Paul Kimber, Champion for Promotion of Learning Through Life, reported that he had met with the Chief Executive of the Workers Education Association (WEA) in which they had spoken about through life education and what the WEA could do in Dorset. He had also been in contact with the Regional (South West) Education Manager of the WEA and had agreed to meet again to discuss how Local Government could partner the WEA.

26.2 Councillor Susan Jefferies, the County Council's representative on the Dorset Fostering Agency Panel, advised that some additional panels had been required, with some lasting all day. The increased activity was putting a lot of pressure on Social Workers and agency staff were needed. Currently approximately 70% of friends and family carers were applying. However the time scale required for a 'friends and family approval' was tight, putting additional pressure on Social Work resources. In most circumstances the child or young person went to a friend or family member before the assessment began and it therefore had to be completed quickly (within 16 weeks).

26.3 Councillor Coombs, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, updated members on the Dorset Safeguarding Children's Board. She informed the Committee that there was currently an Interim Independent Chairman (Rob Hutchinson), and that a Peer Review of the Board's standards by the Local Government Association had commenced this week.

26.4 Councillor Ezzard, Member Champion for Participation, stated that she had yet to make contact with the appropriate officer. She was advised that this was Simon Fraiz-Brown, Children's Services Partnerships Development Manager. Councillor Ezzard added that she would welcome participation at any future event involving Member Champions.

**Noted****Questions from County Councillors**

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

**Exclusion of the Public****Resolved**

28. That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the business specified in minutes 29 to 31 because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in the Paragraph below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing that information.

**Future of the School Library Service (Paragraph 4)**

29.1 The Committee considered a joint exempt report by the Director for Children's Services and the Director for Adult and Community Services that sought members' recommendations to the Cabinet on the future of the Dorset School Library Service (SLS) following the steady decline in the schools' use of the service.

29.2 Members noted that currently only 26% of schools used the service either on a subscription or pay as you use basis and that during the past five years the SLS had not achieved the corporate income target and had returned a budget deficit. The level of income and buyback from schools had now reached a point where the service was not financially sustainable in the future.

**Recommended**

30. That the Committee recommend to the Cabinet that:

- a) the library service to schools delivered by the School Library Service be decommissioned; and
- b) a detailed decommissioning plan by the library service be developed that included consultation with representatives from schools about the most appropriate use of the physical resources for the long term benefit of children and young people. Communication would also be needed with all schools in Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole, the staff affected and other key stakeholders. The plan would also include signposting schools to alternative School Library Services and consultants.

**Reason for Recommendation**

31. Based on the long term trend and current income projection, the School Library Service was no longer financially sustainable as the income generated did not meet the expenditure required. The service would be operating at a deficit which could not be managed and had the potential to have a detrimental impact on the overall library service budget.

Meeting Duration: 10.00am – 1:15pm