



Children's Services Overview Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ on Tuesday, 15 March 2016

Present:

Michael Bevan (Chairman)
Pauline Batstone, Beryl Ezzard, Susan Jefferies, Paul Kimber,
Mike Lovell and Margaret Phipps.

Members Attending

Robert Gould (Leader of County Council), Toni Coombs (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) and Rebecca Knox (Cabinet Member for Communities, Health and Wellbeing).

Officer Attending: Tom Wilkinson (Children's Services Group Finance Manager) and Rebecca Guest (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

For certain items, as appropriate

Sara Tough (Director for Children's Services), Phillip Minns (Head of Learning and Inclusion), Anne Salter (Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Performance), John Alexander (Performance and Policy Manager) and Simon Fraiz-Brown (Committee Link Officer).

(Notes:(1) 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 Thursday, 16 June 2016.)

Apologies for Absence

19 Apologies for absence were received from Steve Butler, Mike Byatt, Barrie Cooper, Peter Hall, Michael Turnbull and Daryl Turner.

Code of Conduct

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

Minutes

21 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2016 were confirmed and signed.

Matters Arising

Minute 18 – Future of the School Library Service

The Cabinet Member for Member for Children and Young People informed members that the Cabinet had deferred their decision pending consultation with schools. The proposals were being discussed at the Schools' Forum on 18 March 2016.

Corporate Parenting Board

22 The Committee received the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on 27 January 2016. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised members that the meeting had concentrated on feedback from a workshop which aimed to make the Board more effective.

A member commented that whilst, from her experience, connected parents did not require the same level of training as foster carers, a basic level of training was still necessary, however this seemed to be falling behind. She asked that the appropriate

resources be allocated to enable this training to be carried out.

Public Participation

23 Public Speaking

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

There were no public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(2).

Petitions

There were no petitions received at the meeting in accordance with the County Council's Petition Scheme.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16

24 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer which set out the budget monitoring information as at the end of January 2016. The information showed an overall forecast overspend against service budgets for the County Council of £4,442k. The forecast overspend on service budgets would be in part offset by the forecast underspend on other central budgets of £2,050k meaning a forecast overspend of £2,392k.

The Group Finance Manager reviewed the report and highlighted spend per service area. He made specific reference to the Family Support budget, confirming as he had in previous meetings, that the forecast overspend was mainly as a result of the requirement to take more children in to care. It had been recognised that the Family Support budget was insufficient and an extra £3m had been allocated with effect from April 2016. A further, one-off payment of £5m had been earmarked with the aim of reducing the number of children in care to 400. There was also an overspend in relation to agency costs, however following service restructure and recruitment many of these contracts would cease in the new financial year, with none being extended past June 2016. For the first time, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budgets had tipped into overspend. Officers were trying to ascertain the true picture regarding is, as an education element had just been transferred into this grant and could be distorting the figure.

In response to members' comments on the number of children in care, officers reviewed the increase both locally and nationally, and highlighted the actions taken to reduce these. Officers were confident that early intervention was instrumental to reducing these figures. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People referred to an early intervention pilot project carried out in Weymouth that had prevented 10 children being taken into care and this was now being rolled out across Dorset.

Members referenced the review of youth service buildings. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People apologised for some delay by officers in responding to questions by community and voluntary groups, due to the Ofsted Inspection. She assured members that officers would support applications and be flexible in relation to received business cases. These would not need to be complete, but she emphasised that an initial interest had to be registered by the end of the month from groups wanting to take up operation of buildings. The Cabinet Member also signposted members to Dorsetforyou.com that had a list of frequently asked questions on the subject.

Noted

Forward Together for Children - update

25 The Chairman read out a statement by the Head of Strategy, Partnership and Performance which updated members on the on going Ofsted inspection. The Authority was being inspected under the Single Inspection Framework from

22 February to 17 March 2016. A provisional determination would be made on 17 March 2016 following which Inspectors would identify areas for improvement and good practice in a final report to be made available on 4 May 2016. The findings of the report would be published on 6 May 2016.

The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services which provided an update on the progress with the Forward Together Programme which was being implemented within the Children's Services directorate aimed to transform Children's Services in Dorset by 2020, so that the Authority was able to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people with the available resources.

The Head of Learning and Inclusion gave a presentation on 'children's zones' that aimed to refocus and strengthen support by delivering targeted support to children and families with additional needs. Multi-disciplinary teams based in one of seven 'zones' around the county would deliver early intervention tailored to the needs of that area and would adopt a family-centred approach. Research indicated that nationally, the cost of late intervention was £17b, with every £1 spent on early intervention saving £8 on late intervention.

The Head of Learning and Inclusion responded to general questions and informed members that Common Assessment Frameworks (CAF), a tool used to collate information on a child in a specific place, had been redesigned and simplified following an acknowledgement that the process had been overcomplicated. A Head Teacher from Weymouth had been asked to further improve the tool and there was now a significant uptake.

In response to members' requests that the presentation be circulated, the Head of Learning and Inclusion agreed, but asked the Committee note that the figures contained within came with a health warning as these were a work in progress and changing regularly.

Resolved

1. That the Children's Services change programme be supported.
2. That the accompanying presentation be circulated to all members of the Children's Services Overview Committee.

Corporate Performance Monitoring Report, Third Quarter 2015-16 (1 October - 31 December) and Draft Corporate Plan Refresh 2016-17

26 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 third quarter of 2015-16. The report also presented the refreshed draft of the County Council's Corporate Plan for 2016-17. 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.

The Policy and Performance Manager highlighted the headline issues contained within the report and made specific reference to the following:

- 856 children that had been assessed as being subject to emotional abuse and/or domestic violence, which already exceeding last year's total by 40 cases. This was due to a greater recognition of the number of children who witnessed domestic violence, and the lasting effects of this.
- The gap in achievement at Key Stage 2 between statemented and non-statemented children had narrowed, and was now on target.
- The percentage of children subject to a child protection plan had improved from Quarter 2, reducing from 8% to 4.6%.
- Waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) remained high. A full review of the service was being carried out by the CAMHS Safeguarding Board.

Members voiced their concerns that the CAMHS waiting times remained high, and of the impact on youths, but received assurances from the Head of Strategy, Partnership and Performance of the increased focus to reduce these figures. She informed members that the Dorset Health Care Trust had been challenged and that they were strengthening their management team. A formal response including an Improvement Plan from the Trust was expected at the end of March and this would be discussed at a meeting in April 2016. The Chairman asked that feedback be given after this date.

The Head of Learning and Inclusion highlighted that CAMHS's specialism had made them a victim of their own success, with all referrals going directly to them. Additional tiers were now being added to the system, such as teachers being trained to offer additional support, which would offer other support mechanisms, relieving the pressure and referral numbers to CAMHS.

The Chairman, as the Member Champion for Mental Health Services, advised that he had met with Sam Gyimah, MP, to progress mental health in schools. They were to meet again in two months time to debate this again and he would email members to advise them of the outcome.

In response to a question, officers confirmed that the status of a school (such as an academy) did not affect the Authority's duties; that of safeguarding and inclusion. It was therefore appropriate for the Authority to work with all schools to carry out these roles. The Authority would however continue to influence schools on things that it felt were of importance.

Noted

Joint Working Across NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group and Dorset County Council to Improve Health Outcomes for Children and Young People

27 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that updated members in relation to jointly commissioned services for children and young people in Dorset. It also provided information around the key work streams which had emerged from the findings of the NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)'s Clinical Services Review (CSR). Councillors were also provided with information in relation to the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) development for 2016-2020 led by the CCG.

The Head of Strategy, Partnership and Performance welcomed Kate Halsey from the CCG. She highlighted initiatives and projects within the report and promoted the development of strong partnership working with both the CCG and Pan-Dorset.

Members commented on the official launch by Barnardo's on 18 March 2016 for children missing from home and the prevention of child sexual exploitation. They emphasised the need for a similar event in the west of the country. Officers confirmed they had been in contact with Barnardo's to request this. It was noted that approximately one year ago, DCC held a child sexual exploitation event at the Dorford Centre, Dorchester, but it was agreed that a Pan-Dorset approach to these types of events would be better.

Resolved

That the continued integration of Health and Local Authority services in relation to the commissioning and the direct provision of children's services be supported.

Provision of Services to Gypsy and Traveller Children

28 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that sought to explore current service provision and accessibility for Gypsy and Traveller children within the county council. It also looked at other potential barriers to Gypsy and Traveller communities accessing county council services. The report highlighted that

in terms of health and education, Gypsies and Travellers were one of the most deprived groups in the UK, therefore the need to ensure these communities could access services was crucial, particularly for children and young people.

Members noted that previously the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS), based in Children's Services, provided a professional support service to schools and academies to ensure that children and young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children could achieve high educational outcomes and reach their potential. This responsibility was transferred to schools in 2013. The Schools' Forum took the decision to end the direct funding for EMTAS and the service was closed along with the links that had been established. However officers highlighted that children numbers were relatively small across Dorset and there were other work streams to engage with Gypsy and Traveller children.

Officers confirmed that the report did not make the distinction between the travelling community and those travellers resident in Dorset, the challenge being that the numbers fluctuated and some travellers did not identify themselves as such due to possible discrimination. In addition whilst new legislation defined the traveller community, this was sometimes at odds with Equality Act 2010.

Councillor Pauline Batstone, as Member Champion for Diversity, highlighted that GRT groups were the county's largest ethnic group and she suggested that when planning services, they be consulted. Councillor Ezzard, Local Member for Wareham, advised that she regularly attended the GRT site located in her division and she asked that the relevant officer's details be sent to her to start a dialogue.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People asked what the Authority was doing to hold schools to account. She also raised concerned that following the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) change of GRT status, the amount of funding schools received would reduce as some groups would no longer be classed as travellers. As Chairman of the Virtual School, she advised that she would take back members' comments regarding the identification and tracking of the educational progress of Gypsy and Traveller children, as part of the monitoring of vulnerable groups. The Partnerships Development Manager advised that the proposal to track progress had yet to be presented to the Virtual School, but based on evidence collated from any tracking, schools could be challenged, as appropriate.

Resolved

1. That the development of an action plan to understand and engage with the Gypsy and Traveller community, to be monitored by the directorate Equality and Diversity Action Group, be endorsed.
2. That the action plan include:
 - Links with existing project and work across Dorset County Council.
 - Establish links with the 0-19 Forum and the Voluntary and Community Sector to understand any work currently being delivered to ensure better join up.
 - Ensure equality and diversity awareness forms part of the Children's Services workforce development, including specific training on engaging with the Gypsy and Traveller Community.
 - The Virtual School identify and track the educational progress of Gypsy and Traveller children as part of their monitoring of vulnerable groups.

Reason for Decisions

Children's Services Senior Leadership team recognised that this was an area for development and the recommendation would enable the directorate to address the issues identified.

Recommendations from The Corporate Parenting Board

29 The Committee considered the following recommendations.

Minute Number 88 - Care Leavers' Charter

29a Recommendation 88 – Care Leavers' Charter

Recommended

That the Cabinet and County Council be recommended to agree that the Authority sign up to the National Care Leavers' Charter.

Minute Number 8 - Corporate Parenting Board's Terms of Reference

29b Recommendation 8 – Corporate Parenting Board's Terms of Reference

Members considered the report but proposed that 2, rather than 1, young person representatives be invited to join the Board.

Recommended

That the Cabinet be recommended to update the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Board to include two young person representatives from the Children's Rights Service.

Work Programme

30 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which detailed the updated work programme for 2016-17 and were asked request additional items through the Chairman.

Members were informed that as this was the last meeting of the Committee, any outstanding items on the work programme would be addressed through the new committee structure which would come into effect on 1 April 2016.

Noted

Schedule of Councillor Seminars and Events 2016

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

Noted

Councillor Briefings

32 The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People requested that a briefing on Child Sexual Exploitation take place to update members on how safeguarding was progressing.

Outside Bodies and Member Champions

33 Outside Bodies

Councillor Toni Coombs, Dorset County Council (DCC) representative on the Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education advised that she sat on the Premises Committee to Voluntary Aided Schools. They had received £3m of bids from the Dorset area, but had only been allocated £2m by central government.

Councillor Coombs, DCC representative on the Schools' Forum then referred to the consultation on the national funding formula. This would be considered by the Forum on 18 March 2016. It was acknowledged that due to both elections and the EU referendum, this left little time for members to respond. She highlighted the main changes proposed to the formula and advised that overall Dorset's position was set to improve. She also advised that from 2019/2020, this funding would go direct to schools and the Authority, in the next 2 years, would act as a shadow to schools to inform them of the process.

Member Champions

Councillor Michael Bevan, Member Champion for Mental Health Services, advised that he had been invited to meet with the Chairman of the Pan-Dorset Children's Death Overview Panel on 22 March 2016. He would share the outcome of the meeting with members, subject to the sensitive nature of the information to be discussed.

Councillor Bevan was also meeting with the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Child Care and Education to see if mental health could be placed on the national curriculum. In addition, he was to attend a workshop by the LGA on Mental Health on 23 March 2016, and he advised that DCC was hosting the National Workshop of Mental Health Champions in October 2016.

Councillor Paul Kimber, Member Champion for the Promotion of Learning through Life, advised that he had met with the Chairman of the Read Easy Group Weymouth and Portland and was encouraging people to join, as a reader. He asked members to help promote this. The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised him to speak to the Communications Team.

Councillor Rebecca Knox, as the Chairman of the Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board, advised members that she was arranging a prevention conference by the South West Health and Wellbeing Boards to be held on 18 May 2016 at the Holiday Inn, Taunton. Both the Director of Public Health and the Chief Fire Officer, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service Authority had confirmed they would address the conference and she was hoping that Professor William Bird would also attend. Another key speaker had been suggested to speak on early intervention, but was unconfirmed to date.

Questions from County Councillors

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

The Chairman of the Overview Committee thanked members for their informative and high levels of debated during his 5 years of Chairmanship. He also thanked both the Director for Children's Services and the Senior Democratic Services Officer for their support.

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 12.25 pm

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