

DORSET COUNCIL - PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7 JANUARY 2020

Present: Cllrs Jane Somper (Chairman), Mary Penfold (Vice-Chairman), Toni Coombs, Stella Jones, Molly Rennie, Mark Roberts, Maria Roe, Clare Sutton and Gill Taylor

Apologies: Cllrs Emma Parker

Also present: Cllr Andrew Parry

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Mark Blackman (Corporate Director - Education and Learning), Ed Denham (School Admissions Manager), Theresa Leavy (Interim Executive Director of People - Children), Claire Shiels (Assistant Director for Commissioning and Partnerships), Mary Taylor (Acting Assistant Director for Care and Protection), Paul Beecroft (Communications Team) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

26. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Roberts declared an interest as a contractor for adult services to Dorset Council.

28. Public Participation

There were no representations from town or parish councils or from members of the public.

29. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

30. Presentation - Children's Services Blueprint for Change

The committee was provided with a presentation with regard to the Children's Services Blueprint for Change which covered:

- Delivering for Dorset's Children and Families including the vision for the service
- The case for change

- How we will work
- Structure of services including central and locality based teams
- The timeline for the process

Councillors considered the issues arising from the presentation and during discussion the following points were raised:

- A discussion was held in respect of children being home educated and the need to support families to get children back into school if necessary. Additional resource was required in order to do more work in this area. It was noted that along with existing links with schools, as part of the new structure and plans for locality based teams, there would be more people within the communities with good links to children and families in order to provide additional strength in this area
- Consultation on the principles of service delivery was being undertaken with bodies such as charities where applicable
- In response to a question, detail was provided of different ways of assessing mental health in children
- Within the new structure there would be officers focusing on children excluded from school who would link closely with schools. There was also a multi-agency meeting where issues were discussed
- Reference was made to work undertaken with older children including careers guidance and work where education was not the right place for a child
- Children's Services was positioning within the community, working with partners including charities and the voluntary sector, and the role of these type of organisations was recognised. The council had its role to play and would also provide support to other organisations in their roles in the area
- The council would be working with partners including schools to determine the best location for hubs
- In response to a question, it was confirmed that although services would be locality based, there would be a central responsibility to ensure consistency in the quality of service provided
- A discussion was held in respect of corporate parenting
- Reference was made to work on new banding and protocols being considered by the Housing Executive Advisory Panel and it was noted that the council had benefitted from having a Personal Assistant with specialism in housing options. There was recognition that the service could benefit from having greater capacity and flexibility
- Reference was made to the council's brokerage arrangements and it was noted that discussion was being held about the most efficient ways of working in this area
- The role of voluntary and charitable organisations in youth centres/work was raised. In response, the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Early Help noted that the decision for the council not to provide youth centres had already been taken and

examples were provided of youth centres continuing to be run by external groups. The council's focus was now on providing an outreach service to support youth work and children in need

- In response to a point raised, it was confirmed that the council worked with and supported all schools as required. Locality working would further assist in this area
- A discussion was held with regard to recruitment of unfilled posts in this area
- A discussion was held in respect of the safeguarding issues in the area and specific reference was made to the process for child protection conferencing, the design of processes and approaches and a focus on quality of data including the recording of ethnicity
- In respect of domestic abuse issues, work was taking place on reinvigorating the social work process. Further work was to be undertaken in this area including the provision of a toolkit for all staff
- Performance data was made available to groups such as the Corporate Parenting Board and the Schools Forum
- Further thought would be given to information provided on the Blueprint for Change including the running of workshops where appropriate
- A request was made for the timeline associated with the Blueprint for Change to be included in the Councillors area on the Intranet

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for the presentation and recognised the amount of work being undertaken, which she hoped would make a big difference to the outcomes for children and families. However, she recognised that further work was to be undertaken and asked for the committee to receive an update at an appropriate time.

31. Feedback from Informal Scrutiny Meeting - Annual Safeguarding Report - Children's 2018/19

Councillors received feedback from the informal meeting of representatives of the People Scrutiny Committee following their review of the 'Annual Safeguarding Report – Children's 2018/19', as considered by Cabinet on 10 December 2019.

A discussion was held with regard to the amount of information contained within the notes of the meeting and what was considered to be an appropriate level of information for future occasions.

32. Schools Admission Arrangements and Coordinated Scheme 2021 - 2022

The committee considered a report which set out the proposed school admission arrangements for the 2021 – 2022 academic year. The report set out that admission authorities were required to consult on proposed admission arrangements prior to determination and detail of the consultation undertaken was provided. The report also considered the proposed reduction in pupil admission numbers for three schools in the Dorset Council area.

The People Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to comment on the proposed arrangements prior to the report being considered by Cabinet on 28 January 2020.

The committee considered the issues arising from the report and during discussion, the following points were raised:

- A discussion was held with regard to proposals to reduce pupil admission numbers in three schools and it was noted that the proposals had been made in consultation with the schools
- The principles considered when determining admission numbers, and therefore the number of classes in a year, were discussed, including the funding issues that had to be considered by the school
- It was noted that the reduction in class numbers could result in mixed age classes in some schools and councillors discussed the issues around this area
- It was noted that there was some flexibility to fund additional places where required and appropriate, or that children could be placed in alternative local schools. The guiding principle was to be able to provide places in local schools for local families
- Where there became a level of demand for places at a particular school, in consultation with the school, pupil admission numbers could be increased at relatively short notice
- In response to a question with regard to keeping children from one family within one school, it was noted that parents were able to preference for a particular school. In addition, the inclusion of a sibling link in the admissions criteria would also assist in these circumstances
- Education Authorities had a statutory duty to educate children who were resident in the UK. The impact of EU Exit was considered and it was noted that following this, EU citizens would only be able to apply for a school place in the UK once they were resident in the UK, which was a change to the previous situation, when a school place could be applied for before becoming resident
- Members of the committee thanked officers for the clear report in what could be a complex area
- The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Early Help also thanked officers for the report and made reference to comments raised with regard to the use of mixed use classes in some schools which could have positive benefits. This view was echoed by some members of the committee.

Following discussion the following recommendation was agreed.

Recommendation to Cabinet

- a) That the following policies that make up Dorset Council's School Admissions Arrangements and Coordinated Scheme for school place allocations from September 2021 be adopted:

1. Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable 2021-2022
2. Primary Co-ordinated Scheme 2021-2022
3. Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme 2021-2022
4. In Year Co-ordinated Scheme 2021-2022
5. Admissions Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools 2021-2022.
6. Admissions to Maintained Nursery Units Policy 2021-2022
7. Sixth Form Admissions Policy 2021-2022
8. Guidance on Placement Outside of Normal/Chronological Age Group 2021-2022
9. Armed Forces Policy 2021-2022
10. Guidance on Consulting on Admissions Arrangements – November 2021.

b) That the reduction of Pupil Admissions Number be agreed for:

- St. Mary's First School, Charminster lowering its PAN from 42 places to 30 places from September 2021
- Manor Park First School, Dorchester lowering its PAN from 90 places to 60 places from September 2021
- Holy Trinity Primary School, Weymouth lowering its PAN from 90 to 60 places from September 2021.

33. **People Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer provided an overview of the items on the committee's work programme and comments were made / items added to the work programme as follows:

- Councillors discussed the arrangements for inviting larger Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to future meetings of the committee and it was agreed that consideration should be given to setting aside a day for the committee to invite RSL's at different times during the day. Discussion areas would be agreed in advance
- Items proposed with regard to Youth Justice Plan (follow up report) and Youth Services funding to be moved to the 7 July 2020 meeting to sit alongside the item on Transitions from Children's to Adult Services
- A brief update report on actions taken following a recent Ofsted report could be provided for the April 2020 meeting
- A report on education in Dorset, including pressure points and action required could be provided for the April 2020 meeting. A request was made for this to also cover opportunity of access to secondary schools
- An item on the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act was requested for December 2020

- The item on planning for recommissioning domestic violence and abuse advice service would be moved to April 2021, in order to review the contract after one year of operation
- A question was raised as to the current position with the Executive Advisory Panel set up to look at Joint Adults and Children's Transitions and it was agreed that information would be sought and provided to councillors following the meeting
- A point was raised that there needed to be clarity on the relationship between Executive Advisory Panels and scrutiny.

34. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.09 pm

Chairman

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