

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 February 2017 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), Angela Sheridan (Vice-Chair), John Allen, Joycelyn Redsell, Graham Snell and Aaron Watkins

Apologies: Myra Potter, Parent Governor Representative

In attendance: Sonny Tipping, Youth Cabinet Representative (*arrived 7.12pm*)
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Andrew Carter, Head of Children's Social Care
Roger Edwardson, Interim Strategic Leader School Improvement, Learning and Skills
Kay Goodacre, Corporate Finance
Malcolm Taylor, Strategic Lead - Learner Support
Andrea Winstone, School Improvement Manager
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

31. Minutes

The Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on the 20 December 2016, were approved as a correct record.

32. Items of Urgent Business

An item on the School Admission Policy would be added to the agenda.

33. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Sheridan declared a non-pecuniary interest as she had a child at St Cleres School.

Councillor Okunade declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect to Item 11 – Update on the 21st Century Children's Centres Services as she was a member on the Advisory Board for Thameside Children's Centre.

34. Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Board

No updates were provided by the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

35. Items Raised by the Youth Cabinet Members

The Chair welcomed Sonny Tipping to the Committee. Sonny Tipping stated that he had recently visited the House of Lords where a group meeting had been held. He was now involved in two organisations – Colourful Success and World Youth Organisation where he hoped to become an ambassador.

The Youth Cabinet Members had held a planning session and posters on safeguarding had been put up in schools. They had also received an award for a film that they had created.

The Chair thanked Sonny Tipping and congratulated him on the work undertaken.

36. Fees & Charges Pricing Strategy 2017-18

Kay Goodacre presented the report that set out the charges in relation to the services within the remit of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These charges would take effect from the 1 April 2017.

The Officer referred Members to the appendices to the report which highlighted the proposed charges and the proposed deletion of current fee and charges.

Councillor Redsell asked for clarification on the high number for the Grangewaters Angling Club. Kay Goodacre stated this was the annual charge to cover the use of Grangewaters by the Angling Club for the period April 2016 to May 2017.

Councillor Redsell asked if the Early Years helped play schools in the borough. Kay Goodacre stated that play schools would be receiving more funding over the next few weeks as part of the increase hourly rate from Government.

The Chair commented on the high figures on the delivery of the income targets for 2017/18 and asked if these figures were factored into the £158k target. Rory Patterson stated that these figures were factored in but had concern with those children that were most vulnerable and those that did not attend school.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the revised fees and charges proposals including those no longer applicable.**
- 2. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.**

37. Presentation on our approach to anti-bullying and our work with schools

Malcolm Taylor presented to Members an overview of Thurrock's approach to Anti-Bullying at Schools in Thurrock.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance was a coalition of organisations and individuals that defined bullying as "the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involved an imbalance of power".

The presentation included information on the national guidance used:

- Preventing and Tackling Bullying Advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies – October 2014
- School Support for Children and Young People who are bullied – factsheet Crown 2014
- Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges Department for Education - September 2016

There were two goals - Give the Opportunity to All and Better Emotional Health and Wellbeing. The two objectives were that all Children in Thurrock made good education progress and improved the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people.

The duties of schools and the local authorities sat with:

- The Education Act 2002 – Legal duty on maintained schools and local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 – Measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils.
- Common Inspection Framework – Education Skills and Early Years – Key Judgements – the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The Equality Act 2010 – Race, disability and gender.
- Criminal Law – a key offence of this was when a person sent an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety.

Work on anti-bullying activity with the Local Safeguarding Children Board included:

- Cyber Bullying
- 157/175 Audit
- Link to the NSPCC website
- LSCB 2017 Conference with Community Safety
- Thurrock Emotional Health Survey
- Incident Monitoring in Schools
- Safeguarding Forum
- Information Advice and Guidance

The Emotional Wellbeing Mental Health Services included “Open Up, Reach Out” and “Risk Avert”.

The “All Together” Alliance formed part of a programme that focussed on tackling bullying in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Councillor Redsell thanked Malcolm Taylor for the brilliant report but asked what happened to those bullied children that did not want to engage with their school or parents. Malcolm Taylor stated that schools were very aware of cyber bullying and that they have a duty and the right to intervene. Work would continue with schools and that pupil safety would be paramount.

Councillor Watkins asked Officers if there were any statistics on the Cyber Walk In roadshows and what pressures were being put on schools to undertake this. Malcolm Taylor stated these were two critical areas and that good attendance had been recorded but was too early to see any evidence in the behaviour of children. Promoting the web sites, continuing to look at the feedback received from roadshows and the training for parents will be provided.

Malcolm Taylor stated working with schools on the approach of safeguarding, there had been good attendance at forums and that data would be available so that certain areas could be targeted and sign posts would be available for schools displaying the resources available.

Councillor Allen stated that there should be intervention between the council, head teachers, teachers and children in schools. Malcolm Taylor stated this was being endorsed and would support appropriately. The Council would act on any incidents reported to them on any maintained schools. For Academy schools the Council would not be duty bound and these would need to go through the appropriate academy complaints process.

Councillor Sheridan asked Officers if bullying data could be used amongst schools for competitiveness. Malcolm Taylor stated that statistics were compared and shared but consideration would have to be given to ensure that incidents were not misleading and were recorded in the same way.

Councillor Redsell stated that it was an offence to send cyber mail and how much were parents being involved. Malcolm Taylor stated that it was important to include parents on any incident but consideration should be given to the impact on a child as they may feel more isolated if their devices were taken away from them. The Council would expect schools to get parents involved in any significant issue.

Councillor Allen asked Officers what happened when bullying occurred outside school premises. Malcolm Taylor stated that head teachers had a right to intervene outside school premises at the appropriate times. The community police officers would also be involved with schools.

Councillor Watkins asked whether the data to hand pointed at more bullying taking place at primary or secondary schools and why the Thurrock Emotional Health Survey had been directed to ages of 6-10 year olds.

Malcolm Taylor stated that limited data was available at this time and based mainly on issues that had been reported to the local authority. The data recording that schools were being asked to complete would give a good indication of the levels of bullying in primary and secondary schools. The Thurrock Emotional Health Survey was newly commissioned by Public Health and focused on 6-10 year olds but age groups would change on any new survey to get a good range of responses.

The Chair thanked Malcolm Taylor for the report and stated that this was an area to be dealt with effectively. The Chair asked what number of incidents had been referred from schools concerning bullying and how was this information used. Malcolm Taylor stated that the school monitoring and surveys would provide the hard data required and the level of bullying was difficult to monitor at present due to how incidents were reported.

Sonny Tipping stated that he was anti-bullying trained and knew what measures were in place and how to advise others and would continue to promote further training.

Malcolm Taylor stated that peer support had the greatest impact and how the cultures in schools could be there to help support and deal with some local issues.

Councillor Allen stated that all primary and secondary schools should maintain data statistics and have robust policies in place.

38. Thurrock Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB), Serious Case Review (SCR) Report - James

Andrew Carter presented the report that included a summary which was provided to the Local Children's Safeguarding Board and stated that under regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Regulations 2006 set out the requirements for Local Safeguarding Children's Board to undertake this serious case review and to learn from the findings. The report was published on the Thurrock web site from the 1 December 2016 and will remain on there for 18 months. The same report will be published on the NSPCC national website. The same report was presented to the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2016. The reports contained 6 findings and 16 recommendations and were drawn up into an Action Plan.

Andrew Carter updated Members on the recommendations and actions in the Action Plan and stated that Update Pending meant the Council were waiting for the agency responsible for that recommendation to undertake their work.

Councillor Redsell stated that the report identified that people were not joining up and not communicating and asked Officers for reassurance that the

Council was now more joined up based on the lessons learnt. Andrew Carter stated that staff could not have predicted the outcome of James and that a learning event had already taken place with practitioners. Andrew Carter stated that he could not give 100 per cent assurance but the department continued to strive and communicate.

Councillor Watkins asked if Norfolk Children Social Care had been given any timescales for responses. Andrew Carter stated that it was not known what action Norfolk had taken. Norfolk Local Safeguarding Children Board took on the responsibility which Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Board could not monitor. That the Serious Case Review had been published nationally and that Ofsted encouraged other reviews to be studied.

Rory Patterson stated that the national overview of serious case reviews contain the learnings and pulled out key items, such as the involvement with gangs and safeguarding.

Councillor Snell stated that it appeared James had been given the support and the opportunities to engage but decided that this was not part of his agenda.

Andrew Carter thanked Councillor Snell for his comment and it would be a reassurance for those involved. Andrew Carter stated that work continued with young people to get the message across about gangs.

Councillor Allen stated that there should be a practice in place to monitor and trigger alerts when minors are reported to the police, social services or other local authorities. Andrew Carter stated that work was in progress with sharing information especially on health matters.

Rory Patterson stated that around the table event had been held by Essex Police on how to work more effectively with gangs and with the Youth Offending Service on how to share information and communication.

Councillor Allen suggested that a "Vulnerable Youth System" be created so that minors can be flagged up and information could be shared more easily.

Rory Patterson stated that there were already good systems in place by the police to track and report missing children to local social services but unfortunately for James this did not happen.

Councillor Redsell stated that the Police Crime Commissioner was looking at how gang activities could be addressed.

The Chair stated that James did well at school but asked whether the school should have been more involved. Andrew Carter stated that James did well at school but he did not engage post 16 years of age.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the progress to date by Children's Services as set out in the responses to the Serious Care review recommendations at Appendix A.**

39. Ofsted Inspection Action Plan

Andrew Carter presented the report and stated that following a recommendation of the Ofsted Report the department had completed a detailed Action Plan. A draft Action Plan had previously been presented at the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Corporate Parenting Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board and a final copy of this Action Plan had been shared with Ofsted. The report presented was an update on the Ofsted Inspection Action Plan and confirmed that the update was from December 2016 and that further actions were now on track that required no further actions.

Andrew Carter stated that they were still waiting for an announcement on the outcome of the Signs of Safety national bid and a revised timeline was required to be extended until August 2017.

Andrew Carter clarified the work undertaken by iMPower and how this incorporated into the new Bright Futures Prevention service.

The aim would be to get the Action Plan to the point of completion, embedded across the office and undertake business as usual.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the current progress and direction of travel in completing the required actions.**
- 2. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive assurance that action plan will deliver the required improvement.**

40. Moving to a Schools National Funding Formula

Kay Goodacre, Finance Manager Children and Adults, presented the report that in December 2016 the Department of Education published the Stage 2 Consultation on the introduction a National Funding Formula. The consultation set out how the Department of Education plan to deliver a fair, transparent funding system where the amount of funding children attract for their schools was based on the need and was consistent across the country. This consultation will close on the 22 March 2017.

Kay Goodacre stated there would be a differential impact on individual schools overall and there would be an increase of £1.5 million for Thurrock as a whole. It was noted that the Cabinet Member for Education and Health,

Councillor Halden, had convened a summit with Thurrock Head Teachers on 1 February 2017 to consider how the authority could best respond to the consultation.

Rory Patterson stated that he had meet with head teachers from maintained schools today with Councillor Halden and Roger Edwardson to brief them on this very important but complex consultation and encouraged them to respond as this would have a positive impact on the local authority.

The Chair stated that more information was required as the report had not detailed specific data on individual schools. Kay Goodacre explained to the Chair that the link in the report could be accessed to view individual school data collections and allocations.

The Chair stated that it was good that Rory Patterson and the Portfolio Holder had visited schools to offer their support.

Councillor Snell stated his concerns that less money would be given to primary schools at a time when children needed more investment to receive a good foundation and more money for secondary schools although this would not cover the rise in inflation and stated this was a national school deficit formula rather than a funding formula and could not see what gain would be made. Kay Goodacre stated that a cash gain to Thurrock would be received and that local formulas would have been worked out locally and how moneys were distributed but this had now changed to a national basis. That the formula was based on early intervention and that money would be directed to that.

Councillor Redsell asked Officer whether primary and secondary schools that were joined up would be better off. Rory Patterson stated that the funds allocated were across the trust as a whole and that all schools should be encouraged to support.

Councillor Redsell stated her concerns for the schools that had no trusts to join up to. Rory Patterson stated that schools would be encouraged to group together where possible.

Councillor Snell asked Officer what schools would likely to be penalised the most. Kay Goodacre stated that those larger primary schools in an affluent area that were achieving well at the starting point.

The Chair encouraged all Members to respond to the consultation. Democratic Services would send a copy of Councillor Halden executive brief note and the link to all 49 members.

RESOLVED

That the Members of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the consultation and impact for Thurrock Schools and Academies.

41. Update on 21st Century Children's Centres Service

Andrea Winstone presented members with an update on the Review of the Children's Centre Service that came to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2016. Over a difficult period, it had been commissioned in December 2016 that five children centres would be retained and that four would close. The Public consultation had finished in December and the Council were given 12 weeks to respond. The consultation was currently with senior managers for sign off and that the staff consultation was due to finish next week.

Rory Patterson stated that the current service was very disjointed and the proposals would bring the services together for a wider age range, have one form of contact with staff working together to create a specific database. A key aspect of this service was working on health matters with the Public Health team.

Andrea Winstone stated that results from the public and staff consultation, public meetings and the professional consultation had been analysed and the services had been changed or remodelled where they could.

The Chair stated that when the report was first presented to Members not sufficient information was given and that Members could not have been able to pre-empt any questions at that time. Andrea Winstone stated that a process had to be followed working alongside Public Health and Social Care.

The Chair requested how much savings had been reduced from undertaking this exercise. Andrea Winstone stated that £400,000 had been saved.

Councillor Redsell asked Officers if the consultation had been undertaken only at the Children Centres or all over Thurrock. Andrea Winstone stated that she was confident that sufficient consultation had been undertaken.

The Chair questioned why the Equality Impact Assessment had not been undertaken at the right time. Andrea Winstone stated that the Equality Impact Assessment had been undertaken as part of the consultation by colleagues. This assessment would require updating and would be presented when finalised.

The Chair asked for confirmation which Children Centres would be closing, Andrea Winstone stated these were centres in Chafford Hundred and East Tilbury. Work was being undertaken with both centres around other suitable locations. It was also noted that Outreach would continue at Chafford Hundred.

The Chair asked for the number of redundancy as a result of these centres closing. Andrea Winstone stated that this would be announced once the process was complete and staff would be advised accordingly. The plans going forward would be to target the greatest need to ensure that the deprived

areas got the services needed and that troubled families would continue to work with Outreach.

The Chair asked what the next stages would be. Andrea Winstone stated that the public consultation had been completed on the 4 December with the staff consultation due to finish next week. Modelling of the services based on these consultations will continue for future services and address those needs of locality.

Members were informed that some of the responses received were from residents who never used the Children's Centres or did not have children at the 0-19 age.

At 9.24pm the Chair requested that standing orders be suspended to provide time to hear and debate the remaining items from members. Members voted in agreement with this.

RESOLVED

That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members to note the progress made. The Chair requested that further information should be supplied to Members and requested that this item be added to the work programme for 2017/18.

42. School Admission Policy

Members were asked to consider the School Admission Policy and provide Roger Edwardson with any comments or feedback.

43. Work Programme

The Chair stated that this was the last Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for this municipal year and that the work programme was now complete.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their contribution and continued support to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Chair asked Members if there were any items to be added or discussed for the work programme for the next municipal year.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the item on School Admission Policy would be added to the work programme for the next municipal year.**
- 2. That the item on Children Centre Services would be added to the work programme for the next municipal year.**

The meeting finished at 9.38 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**