

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 December 2018 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), David Potter (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Abbie Akinbohun, Joycelyn Redsell and Elizabeth Rigby

Nicola Cranch, Parent Governor Representative
Lynda Pritchard, Church of England Representative

Apologies: Councillors Garry Hague
Paula Robinson, Parent Governor Representative

In attendance: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Elozona Umeh, Senior Public Health Programme Manager
Jason Read, Operations Manager of Youth Offending Service
David May, Management Accountant
Jane Foster-Taylor, Local Safeguarding Children Board Vice-Chair
Adam Shea, Youth Cabinet Representative 1
Joshua Aldwinckle-Povey, Youth Cabinet Representative 2
Wendy Le, 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.

24. Minutes

The Parent Governor Representative referred to the second paragraph on page 8 of the agenda and stated that she did not work in a school. The sentence would be amended as follows:

"The Parent Governor Representative 1 explained Ofsted visits within her school and queried whether the service felt they were in a position of never achieving a 'good' rating as the rating moved with each visit."

The minutes from the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 October 2018 were approved subject to the changes made.

25. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

26. Declaration of Interests

The Church of England Representative declared a non-pecuniary interest on agenda item 12 as she was the Chair of the Music Club.

Councillor Redsell

27. Youth Cabinet Update

The Youth Cabinet had been busy in their preparation of their conference 'Youth Con' which would be taking place on 13 December 2018 at High House Production Park in Purfleet. They were also working on a workshop called 'Funky Finance' and was working with partners to complete the 'Make Your Mark' ballot.

Councillor Redsell asked the Youth Cabinet to elaborate on the details of the 'Funky Finance' workshop. The Youth Cabinet Representative 1 explained the workshop covered the meaning of money and the cost of living expenses. Within the workshop, there was a game for participants in which money had to be balanced over a 12 month period to help them understand taxes and expenses. In response, Councillor Redsell mentioned a similar activity that had taken place when she had been Mayor and welcomed the idea as youths did not have finance subjects in their school curriculum.

28. Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2017 - 2018

Presented by the Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LSCB) Vice-Chair, the annual report for 2017/18 reflected the priorities set within the LSCB Business Plan for 2017/18, the progress achieved and areas for further development during 2018/19.

The report concluded that LSCB's priorities for 2018/19 were:

- To continue to develop a Board fit for change with the introduction of a Strategic Group to oversee the changes to the new safeguarding arrangements.
- To support the development of the changes in outcomes of the refreshed early help provision of the Brighter Futures programme.
- To support the implementation and roll out of Signs of Safety and Graded Care Profile 2 processes.
- To develop our workforce to be more effective in safeguarding.

The LSCB ended by saying that this type of report would be delivered one last time before it changed to reflect the new safeguarding arrangements in the future.

Referring to the 'Schools' section on page 35 of the agenda, the Church of England Representative queried the methods the LSCB used to encourage

schools to participate in the termly Safeguarding Leads Meeting for Schools and Academies. The Corporate Director explained the meetings were held with schools to communicate with each other in terms of safeguarding accountability. There were also annual meetings held with schools regarding performance and safeguarding issues. Adding on to this, the LSCB Vice-Chair said education meetings were also held on a quarterly with LSCB and representatives would feedback on their cohorts of schools.

The Church of England Representative went on to ask about the 'additional business processes' mentioned on page 36, third paragraph under Learning and Improvement Programme. Explaining this referred to the strengthening of processes, the LSCB Vice-Chair said the business team were placed on training programmes which were audited through the Board.

Pointing out the graph for Multi Agency Training on page 37, Councillor Redsell questioned why attendance appeared low. The LSCB Vice-Chair answered there were areas that required strengthening but the graph had not captured the full picture of safeguarding. It did not clearly reflect attendance numbers and the training that had been delivered through primary care forums. The process would need to be reconsidered in the next year so the results would give a clearer picture.

Under LAC reviews on page 32, Councillor Anderson queried the 84% given and asked if this was an increase or decrease on previous years. The Corporate Director explained 84% was not the expected number for performance and the ideal number would be between 90 – 95% which would mean a good performance. This was an area that the service was improving in and children in care were expected to have reviews every 6 months.

Councillor Redsell asked the Corporate Director if meetings should take place more often rather than every 6 months. Explaining that this was the minimum statutory requirement, the Corporate Director went on to say that it applied to the first year. Once there was a change of child care placement, the child care plan would need to be looked at again.

On page 42, under Voice of the Child, the Youth Cabinet Representative 2 sought clarification on the sentence 'the Board has strong links with the Youth Cabinet'. The LSCB Vice-Chair explained the Board had worked with the Children in Care Council and one of the results had been a Health Passport for children aged 13. This enabled children of those ages to record vaccinations, dental records and other health records. The Health Passport was currently in its testing stages and it would be rolled out to children in care if it effective. The Youth Cabinet Representative 2 said the Youth Cabinet would welcome any suggestions on how the Board could work with the Youth Cabinet as suggested in the report.

Referring to page 22 of the agenda under section 6, the Chair questioned if it was true that the report had no impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community. The Corporate Director confirmed this was not

the case and would take this back to the report author to ensure it would be incorporated in the future.

The Chair asked how education would fit into the future of LSCB after the new safeguarding arrangements took place. The Corporate Director answered that schools were fully involved with their representative bodies and engaged in wider safeguarding strategies. It was also part of schools' statutory duties to fulfil safeguarding obligations and Thurrock's schools were good at this.

Councillor Redsell voiced concern on schools and looked after children where sometimes issues 'slipped through the net' and schools had to have more control over this. Referring to schools and councillors, she said all were corporate parents and they were all accountable.

Referring to the changes of LSCB, the LSCB Vice-Chair said the other agencies were partners and the Chair of LSCB should be independent and was there to observe the 3 partners. There was no guidance or script for LSCB so they had been resolving issues when presented.

RESOLVED:

That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Committee noted the report and progress made on children's safeguarding.

29. Schools Funding Formula 2019/20

The report was introduced by the Management Accountant which outlined the new national funding formula from 2018/19 by the Department for Education (DfE). From consultations with the Thurrock Schools Forum, it was agreed that Thurrock schools would move towards the National Funding formula but maintain some localisation to support schools in this transition period. Local discretion may end in 2021 when the full funding formula was expected to be implemented.

The Parent Governor Representative questioned if the Thurrock funding formula was sustainable when compared against the national funding formula due to the amount of the money. The Management Accountant answered that the same amount of money was distributed but a different formula had been used so that each school would be impacted differently. Thurrock's formula would target money to schools with additional educational needs to ensure they received the much needed resources to raise standards. This was on par with the national funding formula. The formula would be able to be delivered within its funding allocation as there was a mechanism in place that would only distribute the money that was available.

In response, the Parent Governor Representative sought further clarification if this would be sustainable going forward due to the significant difference in the figures. Referring to appendix A, the Management Accountant explained that the figure within the Schools Block Formula showed the same amount of

money distributed but the only difference was the formula used. He went on to say that the report asked for the basic principles to be agreed as a different outcome could be formulated with new data that would be available in mid-December 2018. The new data would be from a school census that had taken place in October 2018.

Referring to page 49, paragraph 7.2, the Chair sought clarification on 'maintain some localisation' during the transition period. Pointing out the National Funding Formula (NFF) 2019/20 column in appendix A, the Management Accountant explained that the idea was to not distribute the £1.4 million for the free school meals but instead to build it in as protection so the amount that schools could use per pupil was reduced. This would give schools time to adjust to the reduction funding and implement change which would then enable them to better manage the resources they would have in the next year.

The Chair asked if the schools had agreed to the suggested formula to which the Management Accountant answered that the schools had agreed. Consultations had taken place with Schools Forum and the formula had been presented as the safer option. The Chair went on to ask who had the power to make the decision on the school formula. Explaining that it was Cabinet, the Management Accountant went on to say that school were consulted beforehand. Cabinet would also be aware of the recommendations from Schools Forum.

As the report was going onto Cabinet in the next week, 12 December 2018, the Chair asked why the report was going so soon after the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Management Accountant said approval was needed in December 2018 due to the release of new data mentioned earlier. This would enable the service to work through the funding formula before submitting to the DfE on 21 January 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and provided comments on the consultation responses made by Schools Forum to Thurrock Cabinet on changes to the local funding formula to be implemented from April 2019:

- **The National funding formula to be implemented in full from April 2019 with the exception of Free School Meals;**
- **Minimum Funding Guarantee to be implemented at 1.5%, in line with the National funding formula guidelines. Any unallocated funds once the National funding formula has been implemented will be used to reduce the Minimum Funding Guarantee to the lowest possible figure to afford more protection to schools. The options presented showed this as -0.57%; and**

- **A revised calculation for Notional Special Educational Needs to be implemented consistent with the new funding formula.**

30. Youth Offending Service Report

The report was presented by the Operations Manager for Youth Offending Service (YOS) which outlined the current performance levels of the YOS. There were highlights on the work the YOS had been undertaking that included gang crime, knife prevention and child exploitation.

Councillor Redsell declared a non-pecuniary interest as she sat on the Essex Police and Fire Crime Panel. She mentioned using the YOS on previous occasions and suggested that councillors should be made aware of the services the YOS could offer. The Operations Manager for YOS said they were involved with community based projects in which they supervised young people to undertake. There had been good work carried out with past offenders who were making reparations. On reparations, the Chair queried if the YOS worked with probation officers to which the Operations Manager for YOS answered that the YOS worked with vulnerable young people and not adult offenders.

The Church of England Representative congratulated the YOS on the low re-offending figures. She went on to question how the YOS selected their providers to work with. The Operations Manager for YOS replied that schools would approach the YOS as the YOS did not choose. At the start of each academic year, the YOS would send an offer out to secondary schools on issues they could help with such as grooming and gangs. This was part of the Essex Police and Fire Crime Commissioner (PFCC) bid (a partner agency that funded the YOS) which was undertaking prevention work to place these issues as part of the national curriculum.

Welcoming the prevention work idea, the Church of England Representative queried if this would be available to primary schools. She had heard of knives found in primary schools as well. In response, the Operations Manager for YOS said the YOS was involved in a project on transition from primary to secondary school. However, care had to be taken on phrasing words to young children due to peer pressure.

The Youth Cabinet Representative 2 thanked the Operations Manager for YOS for attending a recent Youth Cabinet meeting. Referring to page 59, paragraph 2.11, he asked how the successes of programmes were measured. In reply, the Operations Manager of YOS said feedback would usually be sought from the local community. Also with reparations, it would help the young person to feel a part of the community and for them to give back to the community.

Referring to paragraph 2.18 on page 60, the Youth Cabinet Representative 2 queried if there were plans to expand the programmes. With a firm 'yes' in response, the Operations Manager of YOS explained it was part of the PFCC bid as mentioned earlier. There was also training given on issues such as

gangs and the YOS' offer of help was also available to the community on such issues. He went on to encourage the Committee to recommend the YOS to anyone within their community and portfolios who would benefit from the YOS.

Going on to congratulate the YOS on the low 5% re-conviction rate in paragraph 2.13 on page 60, the Youth Cabinet Representative 2 sought clarification on 'better generic prevention programmes' mentioned in the same paragraph. The Operations Manager for YOS explained that this was also part of the PFCC bid as mentioned earlier. Being exploited or involved in gangs was no different to any safeguarding issue for children despite the risks presented. There was a lack of national research on successful programmes that worked with young people involved with gangs. The YOS was currently with Gangs Line which will be audited to measure the success of the work and used as evidence for the PFCC bid.

Councillor Redsell commented that the Youth Cabinet had the venue and place to discuss the issues mentioned within the report. The reason was because young people would be within their own peer groups. Looking to the Operations Manager for YOS, Councillor Redsell questioned what plans were in place to prevent children buying knives. The Operations Manager for YOS mentioned that recent tests on knife purchases had been carried out by Community Safety Partnership. These tests had been carried out on small and major retailers and those who had failed would be going through the Licensing Sub Committee for hearing. Councillor Redsell stated the need to tighten control over the sale of knives.

Speaking to Councillor Redsell, the Youth Cabinet Representative 2 stated that knife crime had been the biggest issue in the Youth Cabinet's 'Make Your Mark' ballot. The Youth Cabinet Representative 2 asked the Operations Manager of YOS whether the test purchase of knives was enough to control the sale of knives to young people. In response, the Operations Manager of YOS said this needed to be on a bigger agenda across the country. However, Thurrock had been ahead on knife prevention for a while. Adding to this, Councillor Redsell encouraged the Committee to attend the Essex Police and Crime Panel who would be able to answer questions on these types of issues. The Chair also encouraged this.

Councillor Rigby queried the ages of young people that the YOS worked with. The Operations Manager of YOS answered that statutory work was with the ages of 10 – 17 year olds but this would sometimes go over 17. Prevention work was with 8 – 18 year olds who had not gone through the criminal justice system yet.

The Parent Governor Representative congratulated the YOS on the outstanding work they had done. She went on to say the biggest challenge was knife crime as people were afraid to involve themselves in knife prevention. Safeguarding was mentioned in organisations but knife crime and gangs were not categorised in safeguarding so needed to be incorporated.

Agreeing with this, the Operations Manager of YOS said the issue was on language and a solution to move children away from these issues.

The Chair said that the acquisition of knives could also be from the home kitchen. There was a need to advise parents to be vigilant on knives taken from home as well. Questioning the Operations Manager of YOS, the Chair queried how successful the work with Gangs Line was and if the exit programme was doing well. The Operation Manager of YOS answered there had been issues with Gangs Line as they had been pan commissioned by the PFCC to undertake the work. However, Gangs Line had been successful in a recent case and the YOS had been offering support in this as well. Regarding knife prevention, the YOS was currently working with Thurrock's Communications Team on advertising campaigns around anti-social behaviour and knives. Young people were giving their stories which were another example of restorative justice.

Councillor Rigby questioned whether there were statistics on adults passing knives to younger people. In answer, the Operations Manager of YOS said there was none as it was part of grooming issues where evidence would show this happened.

Referring to the test of knife purchases mentioned, the Vice-Chair queried if it was possible to name and shame the major retailers. The Operations Manager of YOS replied this was not within the remit of YOS and that Community Safety Partnership did not name and shame either. Adding on to this, the Corporate Director said there were risks to naming and shaming. However, enforcement action would be taken and the service would work with young people to prevent them from re-offending.

RESOLVED:

That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and provided comment on the update and information provided within the report.

31. Children and Young People's Emotional, Wellbeing and Mental Health - Schools Wellbeing Service

Introduced by the Senior Public Health Programme Manager, the report highlighted the progress made so far on the School Wellbeing Service (SWS). The proposal was for the School Wellbeing Service to develop its work within each school based on its existing provisions. The ethos was to create a mentally healthy school environment in each school.

Stating the importance of mental health, the Youth Cabinet Representative 2 was also pleased to see funding for the SWS from several sources. Referring to paragraph 3.5 on page 70 where it was stated the current service was not suitable for low level mental health issues; the Youth Cabinet Representative 2 queried if SWS would resolve this. The Senior Public Health Programme Manager explained the SWS would identify the needs through each school's

self-assessments and then co-ordinate the support required. The SWS was expected to have knowledge of all services across the Borough and allocate accordingly.

Continuing on, the Youth Cabinet Representative 2 questioned the pathways into the SWS once a need was identified. Answering that the pathways were an operational detail to smooth out, the Senior Public Health Programme Manager hoped the SWS would provide the support to meet identified needs. The Youth Cabinet Representative 2 went on to ask clarification on the meaning of 1.5 School Wellbeing Worker to which the Senior Public Health Programme Manager answered 1 full time whole time equivalent worker and .5 was half time.

The Church of England Representative welcomed the report and stated the importance of mental health. There were some schools that were already good at identifying needs and in making referrals but did not have the services available. She expressed concern on the 6.5 WTE suggested as there was not enough facilities for mental health support so she could not understand how 6.5 WTE would make any difference.

Referring to 'employing an educational psychologist and developing systems of working' on paragraph 3.4 on page 70, the Church of England Representative questioned who would be working together. She expressed further concern on the need for mental health services in Thurrock schools. Explaining that mental health was a national concern, the Corporate Director explained the rationale behind the SWS was to shift the culture and thinking of mental health. Schools were not receiving the service needed but service providers were still doing well. However, the need for mental health services was being driven by the Mental Health Summit.

Regarding the 6.5 WTE, the Corporate Director said this would give a broader impact of the SWS. A number of schools had their own set of initiatives on mental health and the next step was how this could be brought together so the service would be working with schools. The service was trying to change to incorporate better mental health services into their system which may end up with ideas that may or may not work but the service had the ambition and drive to ensure the SWS would work.

On counselling, the Chair asked if this would be offered or whether there would be referrals for this. The Senior Public Health Programme Manager replied the service was working with London South Bank University (LSBU) on a mental health strategy and the impact of the SWS. Counselling would be on a case by case basis and would be referred to services across Thurrock.

Going back to an earlier point made by the Church of England Representative, the Youth Cabinet Representatives commented that not all schools were good at identifying mental health issues as this was not the case in their schools.

Councillor Redsell mentioned that if a designated mental health lead was placed in schools, it would help to take some of the workload off teachers who already had too much work. She went on to say that in a lot of schools that she had dealt with, bullying was not addressed and there was a need to ensure schools handled these issues. The Senior Public Health Programme Manager explained a designated mental health lead was not part of the SWS as schools were responsible for interventions in bullying which was a national directive. If bullying was identified within the SWS in a school, an anti-bullying programme would be delivered in the school to address the issue. Councillor Redsell went on to say that teachers would still be taking responsibility in identifying bullying issues as they were present within the schools. She expressed concern on how well the SWS would work as the services available would be the same as before so could not understand how casework would be facilitated.

Sharing the same concerns, the Parent Governor Representative said staff in her school were already overstretched on workload and would not be able to take on the role of a designated mental health lead. The Corporate Director explained out that the service would not be placing a designated mental health lead in schools. However, there was a role on looking at the environment within a school and issues that had a broader impact on schools.

Continuing on, the Corporate Director stated the SWS would open dialogue up with the commissioning service and new ways of thinking on how processes could operate differently. Some schools did have a designated mental health worker and had been able to work with local mental health services. This enabled schools to adapt the mental health service to the schools' needs. The SWS could help to bring in activities to help build impact onto children's mental health and wellbeing so it was not adding to teacher's workloads but instead encouraging them to think of different ways to work.

On the 6.5 WTE, Councillor Redsell asked if this would be led locally or advertised nationally. The Corporate Director answered the roles were for anyone who was suitable.

The Church of England Representative commented there was not a single solution to mental health issues as children were in stressful environments. She felt politicians needed to look at the national curriculum and hoped to see a future report to update the Committee on the SWS.

Councillor Akinbohun queried if the service had thought of using volunteers instead of the 6.5 WTE. The Senior Public Health Programme Manager replied the idea of volunteers had not been considered. However, volunteers would need to be trained which would take up more time and resources. Volunteers could be considered as supplementing the proposed 6.5 WTE.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny discussed the strategic direction of travel for implementing a School Wellbeing**

Service as a preventative offer to improving Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health.

1.2 That Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny discussed the funding required to implement a School Wellbeing Service in Thurrock.

32. Update on the Free School Programme

Presented by the Corporate Director, the report gave an update on the 3 new schools which were Osborne Trust, South East Essex and Treetops. The land for the schools had been acquired and the head of terms had been agreed. The next stage was for the schools to go through the planning process.

Welcoming the plan of the 3 new schools, the Church of England Representative was also pleased to hear of the extension of Thameside Academy. She went on to question whether the levels of pollution had been assessed and if other risk assessments had been carried out. The Corporate Director replied no risk assessment had been carried out yet but the land chosen was the only areas available to build on due to the red lines of the Lower Thames Crossing proposal.

As the schools would be within Councillor Redsell's ward, she declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item. She went on to say that her residents may petition against a new school in the ward due to the congestion of roads with buses. There was already a school and a rugby club within her ward which already caused congestion on roads within its surrounding area. Sympathising with this, the Corporate Director agreed that placing a school into an already congested area was not straightforward. However, it was for the Council to provide schools by law and it was a complex process when acquiring a new school as there were planning applications and mitigations to consider. The schools were very much needed but the service could try to influence.

The Chair queried if the temporary accommodation for the schools would still be built regardless of actions taken by residents and whether other options of available land would be explored. The Corporate Director explained that all options of available land had already been explored. If there had been no available land to build on, the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) would not have agreed to the temporary accommodation of the school. The process had begun back in 2016 to find available land.

Councillor Redsell commented that there had been other available land but the Lower Thames Crossing proposal had taken these. She went on to mention congestion problems on the A13 due to children being taken to school via this route.

As a resident of one of the affected wards, the Parent Governor Representative thought the acquirement of new schools were great but was concerned that residents were not informed about the infrastructure. She supported the new schools as there was a need for these despite being

affected by the placement of Treetops. However, safeguarding issues should be looked at in the surrounding areas of the new schools e.g. safe crossings.

The Committee further discussed the need for new schools and the problems posed for residents in the areas regarding congestion. The Chair asked that the report be brought back to the Committee as an update on 12 February 2019.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and provided comment on the Free Schools Programme progress to date and the partnership working with the ESFA;**
- 1.2 That Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the update in relation to the Thames Park Free School; and**
- 1.3 That Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Councils plans for temporary accommodation at Orsett Heath Academy and Thames Park prior to the opening of the Free Schools**

33. Children's Social Care Performance

The report was presented by the Corporate Director and gave an overview on:

- Children Looked After (CLA) that were consistently in the region of 300 in Thurrock;
- Increased demand in the number of referrals; and
- The reduction in the number of children on child protection plans and was in line with comparator groups.

An outline was also given on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) which had increased to 44 due to the breakup of a camp in Calais in the previous year. However, these UASC would eventually be moved around the eastern region based on agreement terms. This was the service's biggest challenge due to the significant cost to Thurrock in holding UASC.

On UASC, Councillor Redsell commented that some were not children and asked what processes were in place to reunite them back home with their families. In reply, the Corporate Director said UASC that were found to be not children would usually end up staying. The service would work with the Home Officer on these cases and ensure these people would go into employment, education or training as long as they headed down a positive route. Councillor Redsell went on to ask if the UASC were reunited with their parents. Explaining that there was no contact information, the Corporate Director went on to say that relatives could appear to claim the child. In these circumstances, the appropriate checks would be carried out to verify the identity of the person claiming the child. This was done to prevent trafficking.

Referring to paragraph 3.11 on page 106, Councillor Anderson pointed out that the figures showed incidences of missing children but there was no context on the length of time a child was missing for. Stating that some missing incidences were short, the Corporate Director said carers were advised to report all incidences. The Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Co-ordinator would analyse the patterns and scrutinise these cases in multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meetings. The Corporate Director said a report on CSE and action plans on missing children would be brought to the Committee on 12 February 2019 which would give more details.

The Chair referred to page 108, paragraph 4.1 and queried the position of the action plan following on from the Ofsted inspection. Explaining that the action plan looked at quality assurances, the Corporate Director said each manager audited cases every 6 months in terms of purposefulness and cons. There were also practice workshops in place and ongoing training was provided. The service was commissioning work on advocacy and children in care but they would need to work with families as some parents may feel threatened since they were the natural advocates for their children.

Continuing on, the Corporate Director referred to workload pressures and said there had been more incoming work in the system and the service had just created an Edge of Care team that looked to reduce the number of children coming into care. There was also the SWS and if effective, there was expectation that there workload would be reduced as there would be referral pathways in place. There were also additional staff to oversee and manage casework in safeguarding children in need and care. A number of other proposals had also been put forward.

Regarding CLA, Councillor Redsell asked if a child's opinion was considered if they wanted to go back to their parents. In response, the Corporate Director said the Chair of the review would seek the child's view and if it was safe for the child to return, then it would be considered.

Referring to whistleblowing allegations, the Chair sought confirmation of a report on the learning outcomes and action plans to follow on. The Corporate Director confirmed a report would be brought to the Committee on 12 February 2019.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the areas of improvement in Children's Social Care and work undertaken to manage demand for statutory social care services.

34. Fees & Charges Pricing Strategy 2019/20

Presented by the Corporate Director, the report highlighted changes to nursery charges and Grangewater fees which had risen with inflation.

The Church of England Representative sought clarification on recommendation 1.2. Explaining that Fees and Charges reports were similar, the Corporate Director said these all passed through Overview and Scrutiny before arriving at Cabinet. Some of the fees within the report did not necessarily apply to Children's Services but would apply to other departments within the Council. These enabled Directors to vary the charges if required.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the revised fees and charges proposals including those no longer applicable**
- 1.2 That Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that director delegated authority will be sought via Cabinet to allow Fees & Charges to be varied within a financial year in response to commercial requirements**

35. Work Programme

The following reports were added to the work programme for the 12 February 2019 meeting:

- Children's Centres Update
- Learning Outcomes and Action Plan
- Update on the Free School Programme
- Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children

An update on the School Wellbeing Service would be brought back to the Committee in the next municipal year.

The meeting finished at 9.28 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**