

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 July 2016 at 7.00 pm

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

Myra Potter, Parent Governor Representative
Anne Sentance, Church of England Representative

Apologies: Councillor Martin Kerin

In attendance: Councillor James Halden, Portfolio Holder for Education
Andrew Carter, Head of Children's Social Care
Beth Capps, Senior Public Health Manager
Roger Edwardson, Interim Strategic Leader School Improvement, Learning and Skills
Andrea Winstone, School Improvement Manager
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Charlotte Raper, 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.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of Children's Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on the 8 March 2016, were approved as a correct record.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

3. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Okunade declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was a member on the Advisory Board at the Thameside Children Centre.

Councillor Sheridan declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was a member on the William Palmer Committee and had a child at St Cleres School.

The Parent Governor Representative declared a non-pecuniary as she was a member of staff at Palmer's College and had children attending Little Thurrock Primary School and St Thames of Canterbury Primary School.

4. Terms of Reference

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference were noted.

5. Ofsted Inspection Report and Action Plan

The Chair congratulated Dave Peplow on the outcome of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Ofsted Inspection and stated that an agenda item on Items Raised by Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children's Board would now be a standard item on the agenda.

Dave Peplow briefly presented the findings and commented on the two recommendations from the Ofsted Report on Local Safeguarding Children's Board and briefed members on the review written by Alan Wood into the effectiveness of local safeguarding children's boards.

The Chair asked Dave Peplow that taking into account the Alan Wood's Review and the two recommendations had this had any effect on the service. Dave Peplow stated that no it was business as usual with no change in arrangements until further notice was received.

Andrew Carter briefly presented the report which updated members on the outcomes of the recent Ofsted Inspection which was judged to "Require Improvement". A Self-Assessment had been undertaken prior to the Ofsted Inspection which did not identify anything that was not already known. Members were asked to comment on the 16 recommendations on the draft Action Plan which was scheduled to be sent to Ofsted. There would be a slight delay in sending the draft Action Plan back to Ofsted to ensure that members of the Children's Services Overview and Committee were given the opportunity to comment.

It was stated that the same report was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee on Tuesday 5 July 2016 where some useful recommendations were identified.

Councillor Allen asked Officers was the Council meeting the needs of those children waiting for adoption. Andrew Carter stated that 18 children were adopted last year and that the Government measures on how long it takes to go through the adoption process rather than numbers. The aim would be to reduce the time it takes in Thurrock to be nearer the UK average times.

Councillor Watkins asked Officers if previous fostered children had been approached to promote foster carer in Thurrock. Andrew Carter stated that care leavers assisted with the recruitment of new foster carers but stated that word of mouth in the local community proved to be best method of recruiting new foster carers.

Councillor Watkins asked Officers what was in place for the Staying Put Policy. Andrew Carter stated that 5 looked after children benefited from the Staying Put Policy and that consultations were in place with foster carers and Independent Fostering Agency providers. It was also the aim to actively

promote the scheme as an option and work would be undertaken with the Eastern Region partners to improve the local and regional offer. Andrew Carter stated that the Children in Care Council were in attendance at the Corporate Parenting Committee where a debate took place on the way forward of the Staying Put Policy.

The Parent Governor Representative stated that the action plan could have been more detailed. Andrew Carter stated that a finalised report would be returned to the committee.

Councillor Redsell asked Officers what co-ordination was in place between the council and schools on those children in elected home education. Roger Edwardson stated that it had been evidenced that those children home educated were more likely to under achieve in this environment and would be best to retain in school. Council Inspectors were available but not always taken up by parents.

Councillor Redsell stated that it was good that the same items had been picked up at both committees.

RESOLVED

That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitored the progress of the council in implementing the recommendations of the Ofsted Inspection Report.

6. Review of Children's Centre Service

Two reports were presented for this item as the two services would collaborate to deliver a joined up service for families with children up to the age of 19.

Roger Edwardson briefly presented the report on the Review of the Children Centre Services to identify the most effective way of delivering a sustainable Children Centre service delivery model by 2017. The School Improvement Team worked very closely with Public Health on the 0-19 Wellbeing Offer Report to improve the outcomes for younger children.

Beth Capps presented the report on the 0-19 Wellbeing Model which outlined the key outcomes of the model and how these would be delivered.

It was stated that both reports would be presented to Cabinet in September 2016.

Councillor Redsell asked Officers what action was in place at schools to educate children about smoking. The Officer confirmed that it should start with educating children at an early age and that work on the ASSIST, a prevention programme, would form part of the future model.

Councillor Halden stated that this would be the right reason to bring the children centres and education into public health so that it moved forward in a more integrated way to ensure that children are ready for adulthood. A draft principle would be brought to Cabinet in September for approval after which Councillor Halden will spend time with Roger Edwardson at the children centres throughout October.

Councillor Redsell stated that the Council should be setting a better example and stop staff from smoking outside the office as this does not set a good example especially to the students from the college. Roger Edwardson stated that officers had been given a directive for this not to happen outside the council building but the problem was the enforcement of this.

Beth Capps stated Thurrock had a No Smoking Policy and that the Chief Executive had already challenged staff smoking outside the building and staff had responded and work will continue on preventing staff smoking outside the building.

Councillor Watkins asked Officers what the overall vision of children centres would be in Thurrock over the next few years. Andrea Winstone stated at this time it was not known and that this report was around the redesign of the children centres in conjunction with 0-19 wellbeing report. The long term future of children centres will be presented to the committee at a later date awaiting some government directive.

Roger Edwardson informed members that the "Daily Mile" had been introduced into primary schools where children were walking one mile each day round the school field.

A discussion took place between Members, Officers and Co-Opted Members on Bullying at schools and asked that a report be brought to the committee.

Roger Edwardson stated that the mental health of children was a review to be undertaken whilst working together with Public Health.

The Chair asked how effective the shared premises plan was progressing. Beth Capps stated this was currently at the mapping stage looking at all the premises that would be available to deliver these services in a joint and flexible approach.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the review of the Children's Centre Services to be completed by April 2017.**
- 2. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the report alongside the 0-19 Wellbeing Offer of the same date as the two services were collaborating to deliver a joined up service for families with children up to the age of 19.**

3. **That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the proposed model that integrated delivery of a range of services to support the wellbeing of children and families.**
4. **That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that Officers proceed with the further development of the proposed integrated model.**
5. **That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that further reports on the model would be brought back to the Committee and to Cabinet.**

7. Update on the Megan Serious Case Review Action Plan

Andrew Carter presented the update report that set out the review on the multi-agency action plan to address the findings of the Megan Serious Case Review. Members were referred to the Action Plan which would be monitored by the local safeguarding children board and the local safeguarding children board audit group where sections of the plan had been identified and agencies will be asked to supply evidence to prove that work had been done and improvements would be made.

Councillor Halden left the committee room at 8.36pm.

Dave Peplow stated he welcomed the level of interest to the action plan by the overview and scrutiny committee members.

Councillor Redsell asked Officers if anything could have been picked up earlier on this case. Andrew Carter stated that yes, the review identified that social services had known these children from an early age but instead of addressing the issues and difficulties no sufficient changes were made and for those changes that were made no follow up on the substantiality of that change was carried out.

Councillor Watkins asked Officers what action had been taken to monitor the recommendations that had been completed. Dave Peplow stated that evidence would be requested from agencies but had powers to request information for safe guarding purposes. On-going monitoring would be on-going and continue to share information and undertake staff training.

The chair asked if the "Neglect Toolkit" developed as a result of Megan serious case review have been disseminated and used by children's services social workers. The Officer stated that a Tool Kit designed primarily for adolescence which had been developed to understand what neglect looked like and that the Ofsted Report identified that the tool kit had been used.

Councillor Allen asked Officers when social workers were assigned to a case. Andrew Carter stated that there were a whole series of reasons when a social

worker would be assigned but it was more about ensuring it was at the right time of intervention.

RESOLVED

That the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will monitor the progress of the council and partners in fully implementing the Megan Serious Care review Action Plan.

8. Work Programme

The work programme was discussed and agreed:

- That the item on Serious Case Reviews for James and Harry be added to the work programme for October 2016.
- The item on Final Report on the Ofsted Action Plan be added to the work programme for October 2016.
- That the item on 0-19 Wellbeing be added to the work programme for October 2016.
- That the Performance Dashboard be added to the work programme for October.
- That the item on Review of Children's Centre Services be added to the work programme for December 2016.
- The item on Update on Ofsted Action Plan added to the work programme for December 2016.
- That the item on Update of Child Exploitation be added to the work programme for December 2016.
- That the item on School Improvement Peer Report be added to the work programme for December 2016.
- That the item on Anti-Bullying be added to the work programme for December 2016.
- That the item on Commissioning out of Nurseries in Tilbury be added to the work programme for February 2017.
- That the item on the implementation of the increase from 15 to 30 hours free childcare from September 2017 be added to the work programme for February 2017.
- That the item on Anti-Bullying Prevention at Primary Schools be added to the work programme for February 2017.

The meeting finished at 9.03 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**