

Appendix 2 – areas of good practice

Background

1. As part of the legacy process undertaken by the Children's Select Committee at the end of the previous council, it considered a report on the review of the committee's work (2017-21) at its meeting on 2 March 2021.
2. Within that report and at the meeting the committee considered areas of Good Practice. These are detailed below.

Good practice

3. The Committee would like to recognise the value of the pre-meeting briefing sessions (usually held in the hour before a committee meeting), to provide useful information members but for which no formal resolutions are needed (therefore would not be appropriate as agenda items). The pre-meeting briefings enable members to develop their knowledge and understanding of Children's Services, which underpins the work of the committee. The Committee would recommend that pre-meeting briefings carry on being provided.
4. These briefings have been limited to six a year to take place immediately before the Committee meetings, this was to avoid additional travelling for committee members. The availability of virtual meetings, which all committee members have successfully accessed during the Covid-19 pandemic, offer potential opportunities, including:
 - holding more than 6 information briefings a year;
 - holding the information briefings on different days to committee meetings;
 - opening the information briefings to all councillors.
5. To ensure that a balance is achieved between providing information that is useful for councillors, and underpins the work of the committee, and the demands on officers' time it is proposed that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Children's Select Committee meet with the Cabinet Member and Director to review the list of proposed information briefings (Appendix 2) and determine the number of briefings to be held and when, and topics to prioritise.
6. The Committee would encourage further developing joined up working with other committees, boards or panels of the council to ensure that no issues, or areas for improvement, are missed, this could include:

- Corporate Parenting Panel;
- Schools Forum;
- Health Select Committee;
- Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership (SVPP);
- FACT programme boards;
- SEND Local Area Board,
- Wiltshire Council's Health and Wellbeing Board.

7. Suggestions on ways to develop joined-up working by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Children's Select Committee could include:
 - Communication between the respective chairs when an agenda for Children's Select Committee is being prepared;
 - Annual meetings with the respective chairs when the Children's Select Committee is setting its priorities for the year ahead (meetings should also be held with Wiltshire Council's Directors and Executive members at the same time);
 - Communication with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Schools Forum ahead of the committee considering the budget (usually January / February).

8. The Chair and Vice-Chair should also continue to ensure that the voices of children and young people in Wiltshire are embedded in the work of the committee. This can be done through regular updates from the Youth Voice team and from direct engagement (may be facilitated by the Youth Voice team) with the young people who form the Wiltshire Youth Union (including Children in Care Council (CiCC), Members of the Youth Parliament (MYP's), and the Care Leavers Forum) to ensure that the committee is aware of WYU's priorities and areas of focus. Direct engagement may take place at the time the committee is setting its work priorities for the year ahead.

9. It could also be beneficial to consider joint training and information sessions between the committee and the bodies listed in paragraph 6 when appropriate, to maximise the use of officers' time as well as strengthening working relationships.

10. At its meeting on 2 March 2021 the committee also identified the benefits of limiting the number of agenda items to ensure that there is adequate time at a meeting to focus on the information provided.

11. Linked to efficient use of time at meetings the committee also explored the idea of reports such as annual updates being reviewed by a small group of committee members ahead of the committee meeting, with the working

group's findings being reported to the committee (akin to a rapid scrutiny exercise but without involvement from service officers). Questions could also be submitted in advance by all committee members for the working group to explore.

12. If there was no opportunity for a working group to be set up or meet ahead of the committee meeting, then members of the committee could be invited to submit questions in advance. Officers could then provide answers either in writing or at the meeting.