

Children's Select Committee

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6 JUNE 2024 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Kelvin Nash, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Caroline Corbin, Cllr Trevor Carbin (Substitute), John Hawkins

Also Present:

Cllr Suzanne Wickham, Cllr Laura Mayes

41 **Election of Chairman**

Nominations were sought for the position of Chairman of the Children's Select Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

Decision

Councillor Jon Hubbard was elected Chairman of the Children's Select Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

Cllr Jon Hubbard in the Chair.

42 **Election of Vice-Chairman**

The Chairman sought nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Children's Select Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

Decision

Councillor Jacqui Lay was elected Vice-Chairman of the Children's Select Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year.

43 **Apologies**

Cllr Jo Trigg (Substituted by Cllr Trevor Carbin)
Cllr Kathryn MacDermid
Cllr Mark Verbinnen
Cllr Bridget Wayman
Cllr Peter Hutton
Cllr Mike Sankey
Dr Mike Thompson

44 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved

To change Cllr Suzanne Wickham's attendance from "Present" to "Also present" and approve the minutes of previous meetings, held on 12 March 2024, as a true and correct record.

45 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

46 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chair noted a new, regular addition to the agenda on pages 9 and 10.

A list of standard scrutiny questions that can be applied to almost any topic that a scrutiny committee might encounter. It would be included for members' reference in all further Overview and Scrutiny agendas.

47 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

48 **Childcare Sufficiency in Wiltshire**

The Chair reminded the committee that this was a lighter "update" report and that a full report was received in October 2023. Lucy-Anne Bryant briefly introduced the report which was taken as read and then welcomed any questions.

Debate

Councillors expressed concerns at the level of staff and places in some areas and how staff could be better recruited and retained. The potential benefit of accessing an older workforce who might be suitable and available for childcare roles was raised.

It was clarified that certain statistics Councillors were looking for were contained within the full report in October 2023 and would be updated in the next full report.

It was clarified that the statistic stating 8027 childcare places were available was based on staffing levels and not infrastructure.

The situation in Marlborough for places was explained as being monitored, as due to a lower birthrate any capacity issues had subsided and would be observed for upcoming years.

It was clarified that upcoming Section 106 funding for Bradford-on-Avon would be translated into 24 places and be available from January 2025.

Resolved

To receive the annual report in November 2024 and:

- A specific update on actions taken to address sufficiency concerns highlighted in Bradford-on-Avon, Melksham, Marlborough, Warminster and Westbury;
- The impact of officers attending Careers Fairs and working with the Job Centre and linking with Supporting Families Employment Advisers to raise awareness of a career in childcare (and if possible linking with any available analysis of the DfE's website and national advertising campaign [Working in early years and childcare - Early Years Careers](#));
- The development / implementation of Wiltshire College's offering of Step into Early Years as a starter course;
- The success of Sector Based Workforce Programmes (SWAP) that was planned with Job Centre and Family and Community Learning;
- Wraparound childcare
- How commissioners work with organisations to support on recruitment issues and retention concerns

49 **Outcome of the Rapid Scrutiny on Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy**

As the Lead Member for this joint rapid scrutiny with the Health Select Committee, the Chair opened the item by stating that as a strategy it seemed to address a number of concerns, but it would remain of interest to see how they would be implemented.

Debate

It was clarified that the aim was on early help and prevention rather than focusing on the statistics of those already suffering with their mental health. It was also stressed that attempting to find definitive statistics would be very difficult.

It was clarified that although a contract review was upcoming it was included within the strategy and would not disrupt the strategy's focus or timeline.

Resolved

That the rapid scrutiny group need to review the delivery plan to be able to draw meaningful conclusions and recommendations.

That the rapid scrutiny group meet again when the Delivery Plan has been drafted (possibly September) to review how the strategy will be implemented in Wiltshire.

That CSC will review how the overarching mental health strategy is aligned with existing strategies (e.g. carers support) and how the strategy informs commissioning of related services.

50 **Children's Select Committee - areas of interest and work for 2024-25**

As the first meeting of this municipal year the committee was invited to consider the areas of interest and work it wished to focus on for 2024-25.

The attached forward work programme contained items that had been agreed at previous meetings as well as requests for overview and scrutiny involvement received by the chair and vice-chair of the committee when they attended the annual meeting with the Executive on Tuesday 14 May 2024.

In readiness for the new Council after May 2025, the committee would be expected to produce a "legacy report" which typically include recommendations on future work as well as a review of "ways of working".

The Chair invited the committee to:

1. Challenge the proposed forward work programmes;
2. Propose additional areas of work and focus for 2024-25;
3. Make suggestions on changes that would improve the committee's current ways of working (including briefings, rapid scrutiny exercises and task groups).

a. Agenda items for the committee

Councillors stressed the importance of pre-meeting briefings and their benefit. The need to focus on actionable outcomes from agenda items was also remarked.

b. Task groups and rapid scrutiny exercises

Officers informed the committee of each proposed rapid scrutiny:

Education Performance Outcomes
Inclusion
Homelessness

And each proposed task group:

School Performance and Attainment Outcome
Residential Care and Complex Care
Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Services and Developments
Post-16 Provision
Budget and Major Contracts

c. Standing Task Group

No comments

d. Briefing for the committee

No comments

e. Briefing for the Chair and Vice-Chair

No comments

51 **Regular updates**

51a Safety Valve update

The report was briefly introduced and then members were invited to ask questions.

Debate

Councillors commented that the update reports should where possible focus on presenting how far along the process the Council is and seeing tangible milestones. In light of this the use of Red, Amber, Green rating was criticised as creating uncertainty and confusion. Councillors did not want to see area being highlighted green just because a problem had been identified but because concrete evidence can be seen of improvement.

It was clarified that mainstream inclusion is incredibly important and explicitly laid out as a priority and this would be better presented in reports going forward.

The report was noted.

51b School Ofsted Judgements

The report was noted.

51c DfE Changes - Update from Department for Education

The report was noted.

52 **Working together to improve school attendance**

The committee kindly requested that in future the report include data on temporary and permanent exclusions, including how many are SEND children.

The report was noted.

53 **Schools Forum**

There have been no meetings of the Schools Forum since the last meeting.

53a Corporate Parenting Panel

In process of finalising annual report which was predicted to be positive.

The report was noted.

54 **Directors' update**

Lucy Townsend, Corporate Director for People, referenced the Integrated Care Alliance and their forums which would focus its attention on priorities it can have the most impact on, such as its next meeting on oral health.

Lucy also referred to the Integrated Care Board's restructuring and more information would follow.

Jen Salter, Director for Families and Children, referred to the publishing of the "My Youth Justice" inspection and the report would be coming to the committee at its next meeting.

Kathryn Davis, Director for Education and Skills, highlighted the number of families from Afghanistan being supported in temporary accommodation before being resettled into permanent homes. Some children had found places in Wiltshire Schools.

55 **Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holders' update**

Suzanne Wickham briefly wished to share some good news and awareness of Dyslexia Friendly schools and all their great work that is receiving interest from across the country.

56 **Chair's update**

The Chair briefly updated the Committee on his work within the LGA.

57 **Overview and Scrutiny Activities Updates**

There were no significant updates to report as all relevant items had been covered elsewhere in the agenda.

58 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be on 18 July 2024.

59 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

60 **Glossary**

(Duration of meeting: 10.30am – 12.30pm)

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