

## CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

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### DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2 JUNE 2015 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

#### Present:

Cllr Melody Thompson (Substitute), Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Dr M Thompson, Rev Alice Kemp, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Sue Evans, Cllr Pat Aves, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Chris Hurst, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Helen Osborn, Cllr Ricky Rogers, Cllr Philip Whalley, Miss Sarah Busby, Miss Tracy Cornelius, Cllr James Sheppard and Shahrokni

#### Also Present:

Cllr Alan MacRae, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Richard Gamble and Cllr Peter Edge

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#### 31 Election of Chairman

##### Resolved:

To elect Cllr Jon Hubbard as Chairman for the ensuing year.

#### Cllr Hubbard in the Chair

#### 32 Election of Vice-Chairman

##### Resolved:

To elect Cllr Jacqui Lay as Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

#### 33 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Simon Jacobs (who was substituted by Cllr Melody Thompson) and Miss Chloe Lintern, the newly appointed Children's & Young People's representative.

#### 34 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

**Resolved:**

**To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 April 2015, subject to the following two amendments:-**

- (a) Minute No. 20 – Executive Response to the Final Report of the Schools and the Local Authority Task Group**

**Last paragraph before the resolutions, first sentence to read:**

**“Cllr Whalley stated that members of the Task Group were disappointed that the Executive did not support the *identification* of an officer at associate director level who had overall responsibility for the Council’s relationship with schools and all the services provided for them.”**

- (b) Minute No. 26 – Task Group Update  
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Task Group**

**Last sentence to read:**

**“There were still five primary schools which had not signed up and it was noted that the appropriate local Members would be asked by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director to pursue this and encourage the remaining schools to participate.”**

**35 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

**36 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Cllr James Sheppard, Cllr Melody Thompson (a substitute member) and Miss Cathy Shahrokni (Further Education Representative) on their first attendance at a meeting of this Committee and hoped that they would find the work interesting and rewarding.

**37 Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present or Councillors’ questions.

**38 Final Report of the Children's Centres Task Group**

Consideration was given to a report which presented the conclusions and recommendations of the Children’s Centres Task Group.

Cllr Mary Douglas, Chairman of the Task Group introduced the report and explained that the Council commissioned Children’s Centres via voluntary organisations. Three national charities, namely 4Children, Spurgeons and

Barnado's and one local charity, called The RISE Trust, received funding from the Council to provide 30 centres where all of the services in Wiltshire were provided, i.e. services which were created for local families with the help of local communities. It was noted that the current budget for paying these providers was £4.1 million per annum.

These services had been commissioned for an initial period of three years with an option of a two year extension, which had been taken up. The total five year contract period was due to end on 31 March 2016. Cllr Douglas reminded the Committee that this Task Group, set up on 27 January 2015, had the following terms of reference:

- Contribute to the Council's re-commissioning process by considering what the new children's centres contracts should include to achieve maximum impact and value for money.
- Start work as soon as possible, with the aim of bringing a final report to Committee in June.
- Consider the results of the stakeholder consultation event held on 23 January in Devizes.

In view of the tight timescale, it was acknowledged that some data was not available or became available late, which had presented a challenge in the production of the report. The Committee noted that work on drawing up contracts would need to start by September 2015 in order to secure new contracts before the current ones ceased on 31 March 2016.

The Task Group had visited Children's Centres across the County and had received testimonies and written evidence from lead officers; it also examined evidence from national bodies.

The Task Group concluded that the Children's Centres performed a vital role and were an essential part of the early intervention process, which had overall been proven to be highly effective. This was based on the testimonies of officers, visits conducted by Members and research papers.

It had become apparent that the current length of contract was not conducive to facilitating the building of relationships, reputation and trust with vulnerable families and the wider community and that a longer contract would improve this. The quality of relationships built with the community was vital to increasing awareness of domestic abuse, encourage parents to attend evidence based, transformative parenting courses, such as Webster Stratton and Triple P and to sustain strong partnership working. The Task Group therefore was recommending that longer contracts be used to promote stability and continuity within the service, with the addition of break clauses and regular reviews.

Cllr Douglas explained that the Task Group made no specific recommendation regarding the number of providers but were suggesting that, when evaluating the optimum number of providers, the following be considered:

- Cost effectiveness
- Ability to forge quality relationships and develop partnership working across the geographical area
- Ability to integrate with other early help and early years services
- Balance efficiencies of scale and the quality of local provision
- Any boundaries for provision should be outcomes focussed

The Committee appreciated that each community had differing needs and therefore it would not be possible to introduce a uniform system throughout the County. During discussion it was acknowledged that although suitable good accommodation was important, the building of relationships with families based on trust had been paramount and was still being further developed.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To endorse the Final Report of the Children's Centres Task Group and refer it to the Cabinet Member for response.**
- 2. Thank the task group and Senior Scrutiny Officer for their hard work.**

**39 Executive Response to the Final Report of the Early Help Strategy Task Group**

The Committee received the response of Cllr Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services to the final report of the Early Help Strategy Task Group.

The Committee was reminded that the Task Group had been established in June 2014 to look into how the Committee would monitor delivery of the Early Help Strategy 2013-17 and if it was achieving its objectives. It was originally planned to bring back recommendations to Committee in October 2014 but the Task Group discussed its future role at a meeting in September 2014 and confirmed the following additions:

- Scoping how the Select Committee would conduct the ongoing scrutiny of the Strategy, including the format and frequency of updates to be received.
- Identify which elements of the data set should be given more emphasis, key indicators and areas of focus.
- Evaluate how outcomes were to be measured and how to identify weaker areas.

- Establish how the Select Committee would refer elements that required more attention or expertise to the appropriate forum, i.e. a Task Group.
- Define the data set that the Select Committee should look at on a regular basis and the measures in these areas.

The Task Group was reconvened in January 2015 to review if the data set in its current state of development was a suitable mechanism for monitoring the delivery of the Early Help Strategy, whether it met the Task Group's initial recommendations and how the Select Committee could monitor the implementation of the Early Help strategy going forward. These recommendations were considered in an update report by the Select Committee at its meeting on 14 April when they were endorsed and referred to the Cabinet Member for a response.

The report presenting the executive response was split into two sets of responses and recommendations. The first set included the Task Group's recommendations about how the Committee could measure the effectiveness of the Early Help Strategy. The second set included recommendations about the developing Early Help dataset and whether or not this fulfilled the Task Group's initial recommendations.

During discussion it was noted that the system that supported the early help offer was not joined up and that changes to the relationship between schools and the Local Authority made it more difficult to collate information in that the operational independence of schools was a barrier as there was currently no reporting arrangement to ensure that the Local Authority could control quality. However, Members were informed that currently there was an exercise being undertaken to find out how better data could be obtained through the case management system and an update report would be provided for the Committee.

### **Resolved**

- 1. To note the executive response to the Final Report of the Early Help Strategy Task Group.**
- 2. To request the up-to-date Early Help dataset in December 2015 (as agreed at the April meeting).**
- 3. To receive an update on developments with the Council's case management system in December 2015.**

### **40 Executive Response to the Final Report of the Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Task Group**

At its meeting on 14 April 2015, the Committee received a response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to the final report of the SEND Task

Group. The Committee noted the Executive response and welcomed the actions taken to date. It also requested updates at the June and September meetings of this Committee.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Jonathon Seed, the Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding, to the meeting who was attending at the request of the Committee to discuss the long term strategy for housing issues. He explained that there were certain problems in the provision of suitable housing for young people, many of whom had differing needs. At present there was an oversupply of two bed-roomed properties which were not suitable for single occupancy. There appeared to be an expectancy that the Council would provide homes for young people and it was explained that this was just not achievable. The Council was examining ways in which accommodation might be more accessible for young people but it had to be recognised that at present there was a two year waiting list for Council accommodation for young people.

The Committee was informed that property might also be available from one of the housing associations or from the private sector and it was important that this was recognised by clients and explained especially to parents of young people in need of accommodation. The Chairman informed Members that similar problems arose from the Council as corporate parents and acknowledged that there was more detailed work to be undertaken including possible discussions with health authority colleagues.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note the updated executive response to the Final Report of the SEND Task Group.**
- 2. To receive an update on the implementation of Recommendation 9 regarding how the council meets the requirements of the Social Value Act in relation to young people with SEND, in December 2015.**
- 3. To invite the SEND Task Group to reconvene for a more detailed consideration of the executive response to the housing issues raised in its final report. This meeting to also include a consideration of the draft Housing Strategy for Vulnerable People currently in development.**

**41 Pupil Performance in Public Tests and Examinations 2014**

The Chairman reminded Members that at its last meeting on 14 April 2015, the Committee received a report which provided an overview of pupil performance in tests and examinations in 2014. Members requested an update at the next meeting to include:

- Trend details over a three year period

- Additional data on Key Stage 5 results plus trends for other qualifications
- The raw data as provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

During the course of the debate Cllr Richard Gamble referred to a note circulated in the last few days by the Local Government Information Unit, which provided an overview of current thinking and performance of schools in academy chains and local authorities. He would arrange for this document to be circulated to Members of this Committee.

The Chairman also raised the issue of attainments achieved by looked after children and requested that the Corporate Parenting Panel be requested to look into this and to include information in its Annual Report.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note the further information provided on trends in attainment results by type of school, data on attainment of looked after children and more data on Key Stage 5 results, including vocational qualifications.**
- 2. To request the Corporate Parenting Panel to investigate the attainment of looked after children and include some information in its Annual Report.**

**42 Peer Review on Looked After Children**

Consideration was given to a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, providing a briefing on the recent Peer Care Practice Diagnostic which had been arranged through the Local Government Association to look into practice and outcomes around looked after children and care leavers.

The Chairman reported that the final letter from the Peer Group was still awaited and suggested that, in these circumstances, it might be more profitable to delay an in depth discussion until the next meeting by which time the letter would have been received.

After further discussion,

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note the briefing provided on the recent Peer Care Practice Diagnostic and to defer detailed consideration until the next meeting when the final letter from the Peer Group would be available.**
- 2. To request that a 6-monthly report on the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel be considered by the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group.**

3. **To request that the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel be considered by the Children's Select Committee prior to Full Council.**

#### 43 **Task Group Update**

The Task Group received an update on the activity of the following Task Groups:-

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Task Group
- Obesity and Child Poverty Task Group (joint with Health Select Committee)
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group

#### **Resolved:**

1. **To endorse the following amendment to the terms of reference for the CSE Task Group:-**
  - (4) **To scrutinise the quality, range, suitability and availability of training in CSE delivered across Wiltshire.**
2. **To agree that Cllr Anna Cuthbert become a member of the CSE Task Group.**
3. **To note the update on task group activity provided.**
4. **To note that the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group would be writing to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services regarding a number of areas where further evidence of improvements was required.**

#### 44 **Coalition Changes - Update from Department for Education - March 2015 to May 2015**

The Committee received an update from Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, on developments relating to children's services arising from the former Coalition Government from March to May 2015 as follows:-

- School Governance (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015
- Careers guidance provision for young people in schools
- Academies update
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years
- Keeping children safe in education



- Working together to safeguard children
- What to do if worried that a child is being abused
- Information sharing for safeguarding practitioners
- Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review
- Key headlines to emerge post-election

**Resolved:**

**To note the update provided.**

**45 Forward Work Programme**

The Committee received a document showing the relevant items from the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

**Resolved:**

**To note the outcomes from the meeting between the Chairman and Vice-Chairman with executive and associate directors and agree the relevant changes to the forward work programme, subject to endorsement by the O&S Management Committee.**

**46 Date of Next Meeting**

**Resolved:**

**To note that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday 21 July 2015, in the Council Chamber at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 2.30pm.**

**47 Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items of business.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.10 pm)

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