

**Children and Young People's Services Select Committee**

25 September 2014 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Burrett (Chairman)

Mrs Arculus	Mrs Duncton	Mrs Mullins
Mr Barling	Mr High	Mr Oppler
Mr Blunden	Mrs Le Rossignol	Mr Parsons
Mr Cloake		

In attendance by invitation: Mr Evans (Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life) and Mr Hunt (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Bennett, Mrs Ryan, Mr Smith and Mr Wickremaratchi.

**Declaration of Interests**

37. In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Members declared the following personal interests: Mr Cloake as a foster carer (see also minute 49).

**Minutes**

38. Members asked that any outstanding actions from the last meeting be progressed by officers and that the monthly Children's Social Care Performance Data Reports be circulated to the Committee.

39. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2014 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

**Cabinet Member Responses**

40. The Committee considered responses from: -

- 1) The Cabinet Member for Children - Start of Life with regard to the request to ring-fence the Special Educational Needs Grant (copy appended to the signed minutes);
- 2) The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to the recommendations made at its meeting on 18 June 2014 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

41. Resolved – That the Committee notes the responses from the Cabinet Members.

**Preparing for Ofsted**

42. The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director of Children's Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).

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43. The Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life introduced the report stating that preparing for Ofsted was a priority both for himself and the Cabinet.
44. Mr Peers, Interim Director of Children's Services, delivered a presentation (copy attached to the signed minutes) and highlighted the following points: -
- The Ofsted inspection would be unannounced and could happen at any time in the remainder of 2014 or in 2015.
  - Integral parts of the Ofsted process include examination of:
    - Previous Ofsted reports.
    - Annex A.
    - Any serious case reviews.
    - Complaints.
    - Organisational changes.
  - An Ofsted visit spanned a four-week period – in the first two weeks front-line staff would be interviewed and in the remaining two weeks the inspectors would consider the information presented to them and begin to draft the inspection report.
  - Ofsted is likely to speak to around 20 social workers and all social workers are being coached on the Ofsted interview process.
  - A typical social worker caseload was around 20-25 cases. Newly qualified social workers were not given complex or difficult cases.
  - Social workers had requested additional administrative support for tasks such as using Framework-i, One Way To Buy and other general office duties, which was being investigated. Social workers were also being encouraged to use IT more effectively.
  - The Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life had re-established a cross-party group to monitor the County Council's preparedness for the Ofsted inspection. Additionally there were two consultants in place to work on any issues and Ofsted's "Annex A" was constantly maintained and updated.
  - Ofsted had changed the "satisfactory" classification to "requires improvement".
  - More work was required with regards to Care Leavers as an Ofsted inspection could highlight this as an area for concern. A new Strategy would be commissioned.
45. The following points were raised by Members in discussion:
- Concerns were expressed over whether requesting additional administrative support from Capita would be included in the current contract. *Mr Peers explained that the intention was to provide additional resources at each of the four sites where social workers were located and that it was expected that this would be within the existing Capita contract.*

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- Clarification was sought on what was meant by "coaching social work staff". *Mr Peers explained it was merely a process to allow staff to show themselves in the best possible light by linking their responses to the critical criteria that Ofsted would consider and that this was being implemented through a series of mock interviews.*
- Noted that Children Looked After could have problems accessing support if their social worker was away and asked whether it was possible for buddies to cover for absences. *Mr Peers confirmed that pairing social workers with other non-qualified resources was being investigated.*
- Queried the County Council's retention and recruitment rates for social workers. *Mr Peers replied that vacancies did exist and that on occasions were filled by agency staff. Good social workers were a scarce resource and their recruitment and retention was a competitive process. However, overall the County Council's recruitment and retention rates were within expected parameters.*
- Raised concerns that staff may need additional help with making the best use of new technologies through training and ensuring that IT roll-outs were properly planned and supported.
- Discussed the issues that had occurred in Rotherham and the review in West Sussex that was being undertaken by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, and the need to ensure that recommendations arising from the local review received a wide audience within the County Council.

### 46. Resolved – That the Committee:

- 1) Urges the Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life to prepare a co-ordinated Care Leavers' Strategy.
- 2) Welcomes the plans to extend the administrative support, including IT, in Social Care and urges the Cabinet Member to treat this as a high priority to reduce pressure on social worker caseloads.
- 3) Supports the pairing support plans being explored.
- 4) Notes the update and the multi-agency work underway.
- 5) Welcomes the fact that the Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life has organised a multi-party group to meet regularly to monitor performance data.
- 6) Asks that social worker recruitment and retention information is submitted to the Business Planning Group.
- 7) Asks that details of the review arising from Rotherham, including front-line witnesses, are linked to the Corporate Parenting Panel, with details to be determined by the Business Planning Group.

**Dual Registered Pupils Task and Finish Group Report**

47. The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Dual Registered Pupils Task and Finish Group (copy appended to the signed minutes). Mrs Arculus introduced the report and highlighted the following: -

- The subject of dual registration was complex, on-going and required further monitoring.
- That schools needed to be reminded of their responsibilities to dual registered pupils and to ensure that the Alternative Provision protocols were applied in a fair and consistent manner.
- That all Members should be made aware of the Alternative Provision arrangements, possibly via a Members' Development Day.
- That robust tracking measures needed to be put in place to record dual registered pupils so that any children missing could be identified.

48. The following points were raised by Members in discussion:

- The complex nature of dual registration was acknowledged and concerns expressed that it should not just become a mechanism for moving on challenging pupils.
- That schools needed to be challenged to ensure that they were having conversations with excluded children and were using the Alternative Provisions appropriately.
- That tracking measures needed to be fully embedded within all schools and other providers, so that the County Council could be sure of where all pupils were regardless of whether or not they were dual registered or in Alternative Provision.

49. Mr Burrett declared a personal interest as a governor of Thomas Bennett Community College.

50. Resolved – That the Committee supports: -

- 1) The work underway to ensure that dual registered pupils are properly tracked, but urges the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to process the recommendations in the report as a matter of urgency;
- 2) A further review by Task and Finish Group members (with the addition of Mr Parsons) and a report to the Committee in late 2015.

**Business Planning Group**

51. The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Business Planning Group (copy appended to the signed minutes).

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52. Resolved – That the Committee supports the proposed approach to the agenda items for forthcoming meetings and the outline work programme set out in the appendix to the report.
53. The Committee considered the membership of the Business Planning Group including the proposed nominations of the minority groups.
54. Resolved – That Mr Burrett (Chairman), Mr Cloake, Mrs Duncton, Mr Parsons and Mrs Mullins be appointed to the Business Planning Group.

### **Forward Plan**

55. The Committee considered the Forward Plan, October 2014 - January 2015 (copy appended to the signed minutes).
56. Resolved – That the Committee notes the Forward Plan, October 2014 – January 2015.

### **Date of next meeting**

57. The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on 23 October 2014 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 1.15pm.

Chairman