

Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 4 June 2018.

PRESENT

(in the Chair)

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|------------------------|----------------------|
| Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC | Mrs B. Seaton CC |
| Mr. J. Kaufman CC | Mr. S. D. Sheahan CC |
| Mrs. C. Lewis | Mr. G. Welsh CC |
| Mrs. R. Page CC | Mrs. A. Wright CC |
| Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC | |

Webcast.

A webcast of the meeting can be viewed at
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWFpwBLs6MnUzG0WjejrQtQ/featured?disable_polymer=1

1. Appointment of Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Mrs. B. Seaton CC as Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2019 be noted.

Mrs. B. Seaton CC – in the Chair

2. Election of Deputy Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mrs. H. Fryer CC be elected Deputy Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2019.

3. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2018 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

5. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

6. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

7. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

8. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

9. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

10. Draft Children and Families Partnership Plan 2018-21.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services presenting the draft Leicestershire Children and Families Partnership Plan 2018/21. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

In introducing the Plan, the Director of Children and Family Services explained that this was a strategic document which would set out the shared vision for children, young people and their families and the priorities that needed to be achieved. A lead had been identified for each of the five priorities within the Plan and these represented the different agencies from the Children and Families Partnership.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were raised:-

- (i) The main aim of the Plan was to develop a more extensive offer for families. Within each of the five priorities, thematic working groups had been established to identify key actions to deliver and a detailed business plan had been created for each of the priorities. Progress with delivery of the Plan would be reviewed on an annual basis and success would be measured by considering whether the commitments set out in the Plan had been delivered. Progress would be reported to the Committee as appropriate.
- (ii) All partners had included their logo in the Plan and it was the intention to have a launch event early in the Autumn where all partners would formally sign up to the Plan. To date, the commitment of partners had been good and they were actively engaged in the process. It would be necessary to ensure that this continued.
- (iii) Concern was raised that resources to fund the post to support the delivery of the Plan were only in place until October 2019. A time limit had been placed on the post initially as the success of developing a Plan was unknown. However, good progress had been made and, although there were a lot of competing funding priorities, it was hoped that resources would be available in the budget to continue to fund the post. This would be helped by the fact that the post had now been transferred to the commissioning team within the Children and Families department.

- (iv) The Committee was pleased with the fact that the voice of young people had been captured in the Plan through a series of consultation events. This would be repeated throughout the life of the Plan to ensure that it was delivering what had been agreed.
- (v) The Committee agreed that it was important to know the names of the priority leads, as these would be accountable for ensuring each priority was delivered. There would be some changes to the leads in the coming months, but the current names would be circulated to the Committee.
- (vi) In response to a query around the role of the district and borough councils, the Chief Executive of Blaby District Council was a member of the Children and Families Partnership and fed back to the other authorities. It was noted that there had already been some success, for example, the district and borough councils had agreed to a reduction in Council Tax for care leavers.

The Committee welcomed the draft Plan, and acknowledged that some details were still ongoing. It also recognised that partnership working was key to the success of the delivery of the Plan.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft Children and Families Partnership Plan be noted
- (b) That the Cabinet be advised of the views of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the draft Children and Families Partnership Plan.

11. Progress Report: Ofsted Recommendations as part of the Ofsted Continuous Improvement Action Plan 2017-2020 - the Road to Excellence.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services detailing the progress made against the Ofsted Continuous Improvement Action Plan (OCIAP) in responding to the Single Inspection of Children's Social Care in November 2016. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from a discussion, the following comments were raised:-

- (i) Progress had been made with improvements to First Response, including timeliness of response and management oversight. This had been recognised by an independent consultant who had undertaken a mock inspection in May. The areas highlighted for development were the same as those identified by the department and work was taking place to address these.
- (ii) The main challenge to being able to undertake work to maintain improvements was the recruitment and retention of staff. There had been a number of appointments, but an issue was the recruitment of experienced social workers. A cohort of newly qualified social workers had been appointed who were due to commence in the summer. However, for the first year, these would have a reduced case load and required additional support. As a result, in certain cases, some agency staff had been retained.
- (iii) It was noted that recruitment of experienced social workers was an issue nationally. However, within Leicestershire, there had been a delay with the

development of the recruitment and retention strategy and the County Council had traditionally offered a lesser financial incentive.

- (iv) In response to a query around how much staffing had been increased, it was stated that the department was not carrying vacancies, but some of the posts had been filled using agency staff. All manager posts had been recruited to and the Independent Reviewing Officer vacancies were currently being filled. An issue was the recruitment of staff to the Child Protection and Supporting Families teams in localities. These teams were currently being reviewed to ensure that caseloads were appropriate. However, compared to 18 months ago, the overall current staffing situation was much improved.
- (v) With regard to recruitment targets, it was confirmed that these were based on caseload size rather than the number of staff required. Caseloads were reviewed regularly and staffing requirements adjusted accordingly. It was confirmed that recruitment targets had been met in a number of areas, and the areas where improvements were required had been identified. It was suggested that future reports should contain more detail about the progress that had been made towards meeting the targets.
- (vi) There was some concern that the issue around recruitment and retention had not been included in the written report and it was felt that it would have been more useful for the Committee to have had this information prior to the meeting to allow better scrutiny. Consideration would be given to the presentation of information for the next report. Details of the recruitment and retention strategy would also be presented to the next meeting.
- (vii) It was stated that the County Council was performing well against the national average for the number of days from entering care to adoption and the number of days from court authority to placing a child. It would be very difficult to reduce the average number of days significantly due to the legal processes that needed to be followed prior to an agreement being reached on where to place a child.
- (viii) The dental checks and health checks for children in care had improved, but some members of the Committee felt that these figures should be at 100%. It would be very difficult to achieve this as older young people often chose not to have the checks. In comparison with other authorities, Leicestershire was average and work was taking place to further improve the numbers.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be noted;
- b) That officers be requested to ensure that future reports on progress with the Ofsted recommendations include more detail, particularly on areas of challenge;
- c) That details of the recruitment and retention strategy be presented to a future meeting.

12. Overview of the Youth Offending Service.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Families Services providing an overview of the Youth Offending Service, focussing on the performance of

the service against national youth justice board indicators and on a number of areas of work and development within the service linked to local and national priorities. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 12', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were raised:-

- (i) Leicestershire and Rutland Sport had previously given £10,000 to fund the Kick Start Your Life Project. Further funding had been requested from the Youth Offending Service Management Board and there was also the possibility of receiving a further three years' funding from Leicestershire and Rutland Sport.
- (ii) The Committee expressed concern around the fact that knife crime was escalating. There was a link between knife crime and the use of social media by gangs, although gang related activity was not a significant issue in Leicestershire. A major concern was the establishment of organised crime and in order to tackle this, any work had to be preventative and at an early stage.
- (iii) Further work would take place with schools to promote the preventative message around knife crime and gangs. It was noted that areas of deprivation were most at risk and the Supporting Leicestershire Families and Local Area teams worked in these areas to prevent young people from being drawn into gang related activities.
- (iv) Some prevention work had previously been undertaken by the Youth Service through the provision of youth clubs and activities. The County Council had undertaken a review and as a result these services were now targeted at looked after children or children with special educational needs and disabilities. There were also 21 Youth Workers who primarily worked with young people who were vulnerable or at risk of offending. Youth clubs had ceased to be popular so there had been a requirement to identify more innovative ways to engage with these young people, such as through the IMPACT project or schemes run in conjunction with leisure providers. A scheme called Kicks was also being developed by Leicester City Football Club.
- (v) The Lammy Report had highlighted a national concern regarding the experiences of the Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) group in the Youth Justice System. Locally, research was currently being undertaken using software called Tableau to interrogate data and identify whether different BAME groups were affected differently. It was anticipated that this would occur in the next two/three months, after which an update would be provided to the Committee. A regular annual report would also be presented to the Youth Offending Service Management Board.
- (vi) The Committee acknowledged the positive work of the IMPACT project but stated that, whilst Members had previously received information relating to IMPACT work that was taking place in their areas, this had not been received recently. Officers were asked to consider recommencing this communication.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be noted

- b) That an update be provided to a future meeting around the data in relation to the Black Asian Minority Ethnic group
- c) That the IMPACT work being undertaken at a local level be communicated to Elected Members.

13. Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan 2018/19.

The Committee considered a report of the Independent Chairman of the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board presenting the Business Plan for 2018/19 for the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 13', is filed with these minutes.

There were five priorities within the Business Plan, the first one being Partnership Transition. The Committee was informed that there would no longer be a requirement to have a Local Safeguarding Children Board, although local arrangements would have to be made. Final guidance on the arrangements was expected early in the summer, after which local authorities would have twelve months to agree their arrangements and a further three months to implement them. The Board would continue in its current form during the transition period and the proposed changes would be reported to the Committee and the Cabinet later in the year.

A query was raised around how the priorities would be implemented as agencies had different IT systems and standards. It was confirmed that there was set of joint policies and procedures for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and that performance indicators and standards were derived from these. There was also a Safeguarding Effectiveness Group which monitored the performance of the Board. In terms of having one IT system across all agencies, this would not be possible. However, it was necessary to quality assure the sharing of information across agencies and the new arrangements would ensure that this continued.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

14. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 4 July 2018 at 1.30pm.