

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

held on Monday, 26th September, 2016 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor Rhoda Bailey (Chairman)
Councillor S Pochin (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors B Dooley, D Flude, L Jeuda, G Merry, A Moran and J Saunders

In attendance

Councillor L Durham – Children and Families Portfolio Holder
Councillor G Hayes – Deputy Children and Families Portfolio Holder

J Forster - Director of Education and 14-19 Skills
N Moorhouse - Director of Children's Social Care
K Rose - Head of Service - Children's Safeguarding
T Ryan - Director of Children's Prevention & Support

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence

19 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2017

RESOLVED

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

21 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no whipping declarations

22 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present wishing to speak

23 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PERFORMANCE SCORECARD - QUARTER 1, 2016-17

Consideration was given to the performance across the Children and Families Service for quarter 1, 2016-17. The performance scorecard provided essential data along with qualitative information to measure the effectiveness of services within children's services. A number of changes had been made since the previous quarter to make the measures around early intervention more appropriate.

The following comments were made by Members:

Nationally an increasing number of babies were being taken into care, more needed to be done to support parents and keep babies at home. Officers highlighted that the Children's Centres pilot, Parenting Journey, would improve the offer to parents, including ways to red flag and provide early intervention.

There was an ever increasing demand on social workers, due to the increase of awareness, child protection plans and referrals. It was highlighted that resources had been increased in Crewe and Macclesfield, however early intervention and prevention was crucial.

It was noted that there were proposals for 2 additional children's homes, which would increase capacity, include emergency provision and help address complex needs. Members commented that they had not been involved in section 44 visits for some time, officers agreed to look into this matter and report back to those members involved.

With regard to education and 14-19 skills, it was noted that the virtual school was only for children aged 16 and under. It was agreed that while this was having a positive impact on its target audience more needed to be done and the remit widened.

With regard to schools accepting children with complex needs, officers reported that there were fair access protocols in place and that only the Secretary of State had the power to direct academies to accept children. Cheshire East had not previously referred any cases to the Secretary but would do so in the future. It was agreed that the Committee would receive a breakdown of primary school children excluded from school.

With regard to prevention and support, it was agreed that a more detailed scorecard was required. Reference 7.2 would in future, focus on 0-2 year olds and not 0-4 year olds.

Members requested an update on the level of support received by the police for youth engagement.

With regard to reference 10.2 and 10.3 – Special Educational needs, it was noted that a lot of work was still required, a restructure of the team was planned that would include additional front line workers and provide a supportive element to schools.

RESOLVED

1. That the performance scorecard be received
2. That a breakdown of all primary school children excluded from school be circulated to the Committee.
3. That a report on the level of support received by the police for youth engagement be circulated to the committee.

24 LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

Consideration was given to the Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2015-16 and Business Plan Priorities for 2016-2018. The report set out how effective the partnership had been and how well it had done against its priorities, it was clear that there were still improvements to be made, as evident in the performance scorecard. It was reported that Gill Frame had been appointed as the new Chairman of the Board.

With regard to CSE, Members noted that positively, 73% of cases flagged in 2015-2106 had been closed as the young person was now being protected and plans were in place.

RESOLVED

That the annual report be received.

25 CARE LEAVERS UPDATE

Consideration was given to an update on national and local developments in relation to Cheshire East care leavers. Local developments included unaccompanied asylum seeking children, care leaver pledge and an overview of progress within the service. It was acknowledged that while the accommodation for care leavers was acceptable the education offer still needed work.

The Chairman reported that she had met with two care leavers and highlighted the following issues from that meeting:

- Care leavers would benefit from a counselling service to help with mental health support and an on call 'parenting service' to give advice with ordinary day to day problems and life skills.
- The sudden change in the amounts given for birthdays and Christmas was concerning. Notice had been given in a 'not so child friendly letter' and there had been no phasing in of the new arrangements.
- Costs for health care needed to be addressed.
- Pathway plans meeting should not be held in school during school time, care leavers should be able to chair these meetings.

RESOLVED

1. That the update be received.
2. That consideration be given to issues highlighted by the Chairman.

26 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the work programme and areas of the forward plan which fell within the remit of the Committee. It was agreed that the following amendments would be made to the work programme:

- That the meeting scheduled for 31 October 2016 be a formal meeting in order for the Committee to give consideration to the CSE Task and Finish Final Report and the Independent Review Officer annual report.
- That the budget savings within the Children and Families Service be considered by the Committee on 27 March 2017.
- That a Task and Finish Review on SEND Reforms commence in September 2017.

With regard to the forward plan, members highlighted that the Committee had not been given the opportunity to consider certain reports prior to being submitted to Cabinet.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be approved subject to the comments highlighted above.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.25 pm

Councillor Rhoda Bailey (Chairman)