

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

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

held on Monday, 25th November, 2019 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor J Saunders (Chairman)

Councillors M Addison, J Barber, M Beanland, D Brown, J Buckley, C Bulman, M Houston and A Moran

Councillor J Rhodes attended to present Minute No. 34.

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS IN ATTENDANCE

(none)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14-19 Skills
Gill Frame, Independent Chair, Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Board*
David Leadbetter
Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People
Alison Stathers-Tracey, Director of Early Help and Prevention
Alex Thompson, Director of Financial and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer)**

* Attended for Minute No. 30 only

** Attended for Minute No. 31 only

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Butterill and S Handley.

26 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

28 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

No whipping declarations were received.

29 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

The committee welcomed Mr Plant and the school choir of St Mary's Catholic Primary School in Crewe who, as part of November Children's Rights Month were invited to perform two songs to the committee.

The children performed their song 'Every Child Has Rights' which was written for the school's children's rights awards programmed and had been published by UNICEF as a learning resource.

RESOLVED –

The committee thanked the children and teachers of St Mary's Catholic Primary School for attending the meeting and performing their songs.

30 LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

Consideration was given to the 2018/19 annual report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board ...

Members asked questions and put comments in relation to;

- why the council's assessment timescales had been lower than its statistical neighbours;
- the reason for the 51% increase in reported incidences of child sexual exploitation; and
- receiving clarity on Appendix 2 to the annual report and why there had been lower representation from primary school heads at Board meetings.

Gill Frame, Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, responded to members' questions and gave reassurance that the increased reports of child sexual exploitation had arisen from there being greater awareness of the issue and that authorities had changed the way in which it is reported.

RESOLVED –

- 1 That the report be received and noted.
- 2 That any additional written responses to members' questions be circulated to the committee via email.

31 PRE-BUDGET 2020/21 CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to the Pre-Budget 2020/21 Consultation proposals that fell within the committee's remit.

Members asked questions and put comments in relation to;

- the proposed reduction in funding for community transport services for SEND and other children and families services, and that these planned savings seemed unrealistic;
- concern as to how the funding reduction to community transport services would impact on how children were dropped off and picked up, particularly those that are more sensitive to changed environments and situations;
- the proposal to reduce funding for early help services and the wider impacts that this would have on service connectivity as well as the overall effectiveness of other key service areas.

RESOLVED –

That the comments and feedback raised by the committee be collated alongside those of the other overview and scrutiny committees, to be presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 January 2020.

32 CHESHIRE EAST ALL-AGE AUTISM STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the new All Age Autism Strategy – coproduced by the council, local NHS bodies and the partners – that helped the council to meet its statutory requirement to produce such a strategy, as outlined in the Autism Act 2009.

Members asked questions and put comments in relation to;

- whether the 82 survey responses were from individuals, or whether some were received from larger groups or agencies that reflected the views of a greater number of people;
- whether the views of parents and carers were captured during the undertaking of the survey;
- that the council would benefit from using different survey methods to improve response rates from different groups;
- whether the reference in the report to a new team would create additional costs or resources to the council; and
- that more examples of how the council compared to benchmarks or statistically neighbouring authorities, would have helped to contextualise the council's current position and its ambition for this strategy.

RESOLVED –

That the All Age Autism Strategy be endorsed.

33 PERFORMANCE SCORECARD - QUARTER 2 (2019/20)

Consideration was given to the performance data relating to services within the committee's remit, from quarter two of the 2019/20 municipal year.

RESOLVED –

That the update on performance be noted.

34 SEND LOCAL OFFER FOR 16 TO 25 YEAR OLDS

Consideration was given to the final report of the SEND Task and Finish Group on the local offer of SEND services for 16 to 25 year olds in Cheshire East.

RESOLVED –

The committee supported and endorsed the report, and noted that it would be presented to Cabinet on 3 December 2019 for consideration of the findings and recommendations of group.

35 FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to the council's forward plan of key decisions.

RESOLVED –

That the forward plan be noted.

36 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee reviewed its work programme.

RESOLVED –

That the work programme be agreed.

The meeting commenced at 1.30 pm and concluded at 3.37 pm

Councillor J Saunders (Chairman)