

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 20th September, 2011 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor A Kolker (Chairman)
Councillor K Edwards (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors L Brown, S Gardiner, P Hoyland, D Mahon, D Neilson, W Livesley,
M Sherratt, B Silvester and McCann and Jill Kelly

Apologies

Councillors G Merry

In Attendance

Councillor Hilda Gaddum and Councillor Rhoda Bailey

Officers

Lorraine Butcher – Strategic Director Children, Families and Adults
Cath Knowles - Head of safeguarding & Specialist Services
Tony Crane - Head of Service - Early Intervention & Prevention
Anne Gadsden – Excellence and Equity Manager
Peter Cavanagh - 14 - 25 Learning and Achievement Manager
Mark Grimshaw – Scrutiny Officer

86 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That subject to the following amendments the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2011 be approved as a correct record.

- a) That on page 4, under the heading 'Cheshire East Family Service' parts a) and b) be merged so that it reads 'That the Committee agree to the development of a Cheshire East Family Service and the targeted approach to prevention and that the costs and rationale of the newly developed operational structure be distributed to Members of the Committee.
- b) That on page 5, under the heading 'work programme update' the words 'with a Membership of seven' be added to part a) after the words 'Home to School Transport be established'.

87 DECLARATION OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

None noted.

88 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public who wished to address the Committee.

89 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE UPDATE

Lorraine Butcher, Strategic Director of Children, Families and Adults, attended to provide a verbal update on changes to the management structure. It was reported that a re-organisation of the corporate management team had been undertaken and within this it had been endorsed that the positions of Director of Children's Services and Director of Adults Services be merged into one position of Strategic Director for Children's, Families and Adults Services.

Lorraine Butcher explained that this change had been driven not only by a need for greater efficiencies but also because there was recognition of a convergence between both the children's and adult's agendas. Lorraine Butcher continued to report on a number of challenges and opportunities that would arise from the 'joining up' the management of both Directorates. It was highlighted how a number of common elements along with strong leadership and existing robust processes would enable both Directorates to make the most of the opportunities and overcome the challenges.

The point was raised that the Cheshire East had appeared to have gone 'full circle' with the re-appointment of a Strategic Director of Children's and Adult's services. It was asserted that the constant changing of management structures could be unsettling for staff and therefore a period of stability was called for. Lorraine Butcher agreed that a period of stability in terms of management structures was important and it was fully expected that this would now be the case. Lorraine Butcher also explained that when the two Directorates had been brought together under one Director previously, both departments had not been in the position to make the most of the opportunities available at that time. There had been a need to keep them apart in order for them to develop. It was stated that Cheshire East was now in a position where joint working between the children's and adult's services would be mutually beneficial.

It was stated that there needed to be more recognition of education in the Children's Directorate and that it must not be lost in the restructure. Lorraine Butcher asserted that whilst education remained an integral part of the Directorate, local authorities were in a different place in terms of their relationship with schools and that this relationship would continue to change at speed.

It was suggested that it would be useful if the Committee could receive a breakdown of responsibilities aligned to each respective senior manager.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the update be noted
- b) That a breakdown of responsibilities aligned to each senior manager be distributed to the Committee.

90 OFSTED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SERVICES

Lorraine Butcher attended to present a report which detailed the OFSTED Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services. Lorraine Butcher reported that the inspection was carried out from 27 June to 8 July 2011 and its purpose was to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people were properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers.

Lorraine Butcher stated that on the whole the report was very positive. It was explained that the outcomes did not quite reflect the content of the report as OFSTED had been unable to award Cheshire East 'good' in a number of categories due to the inability to demonstrate 'sustained improvement'. This was not due to any failing by the Council or its officers but more due to the fact that the first fifteen months post Local Government Re-organisation had been a forced period of development with a large amount of flux. Lorraine Butcher asserted that the report had made it clear that the foundations for a well performing service had been established and that the Directorate were confident on delivering on the outlined areas of improvement.

The Chairman commented that before asking any questions, the Committee must be clear on what they wanted to do with the report from a scrutiny perspective. It was suggested that a special meeting could be established to go through the report in more detail and that this should be held before the next scheduled meeting on 18 October 2011 if possible.

A point was made with regards to the proposed changes to the OFSTED inspection regime. It was queried whether Cheshire East would start to measure by the success of a child's journey through the various processes as suggested by the Munroe Review. Lorraine Butcher reported that Cheshire East was already planning towards the proposed new inspection framework which would include approaches outlined in the Munroe Review. Having said this, it was asserted that it was better to build in self assessment through embedded good practice rather than to just prepare for a one off inspection.

As a final point, attention was drawn to the fact that the children's residential home at Claremont Road had received an outstanding judgement in every category from a recent OFSTED inspection. The Chairman suggested that congratulations be passed onto the staff and management team and that it be noted in the minutes.

RESOLVED –

- a) That a special meeting be convened to go through the OFSTED report in more detail before the next scheduled meeting on 18 October 2011.
- b) That the Committee's congratulations for the staff and management team involved with the residential homes on Claremont Road be noted.

91 SUMMARY OF SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE 2010-11 & QUARTER 1 REPORTING 2011-12 FOR THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DIRECTORATE

Lorraine Butcher attended to present a report to update on the year end performance relating to school academic standards for the 2010/11 academic year as well as to summarise the Quarter 1 Performance of the Children's and Families Directorate.

After considering the report, a number of Members queried the use of the term 'narrowing the gap' described in paragraph 10.6. It was suggested that an authority could 'narrow the gap' by bringing down higher achieving schools and pupils rather than by bringing those at the bottom to a higher level. Lorraine Butcher confirmed that there was no perverse incentive behind the concept and that it only meant that Cheshire East would strive to drive up standards across the board and also to narrow the gap in achievement between those young people in receipt of free school meals and those not in receipt.

It was asserted that more needed to be done to tackle low achievement in a number of Cheshire East schools. In terms of paragraph 10.6(e), which stated as a priority for the 2011-12 academic year: 'To commission, as required, high quality personnel to support the ongoing monitoring and challenge to schools underperforming or at risk of underperforming', it was queried what this actually meant. With this in mind, it was suggested a report was required which outlined what was being done to improve underperforming schools and that this should be added to the work programme.

It was queried whether all the academic results from Academies had been received. Lorraine Butcher confirmed that these had been received but drew attention to the fact that as there was no requirement for Academies to report performance to Local Authorities

RESOLVED –

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That an item be added to the work programme relating to what Cheshire East were doing and were able to do to improve underperforming schools.

92 WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Members considered the work programme.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the Membership of the Home to School Transport Task and Finish Review remain at six Members.
- b) That a Task and Finish Review on Health and Cared for Children be established in partnership with the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and that the final Membership of the Group be left to the discretion of the Chairman.

- c) That an item relating to childcare support for working parents be added to the work programme.

93 TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Members considered the Committee's training requirements for the 2011/12 Civic year.

RESOLVED – That the following items be added to the work programme as independent training sessions for the Committee:

- Local Authorities' changing interface with schools and education.
- The architecture of partnerships in relation to the Children's Directorate and the value they add.

94 FORWARD PLAN - EXTRACTS

The Committee gave consideration to the extracts of the forward plan which fell within the remit of the Committee. It was suggested that in relation to Business Planning Process item, it would be useful if the Committee received a summary when Cabinet had received an update on the budget position.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the forward plan be noted
- b) That the Committee receive a summary of any budget position update relating to children's services received by the Cabinet.

95 CONSULTATIONS FROM CABINET

There were no consultations from Cabinet.

The meeting commenced at 1.35 pm and concluded at 3.50 pm

Councillor A Kolker (Chairman)