

## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

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

held on Monday, 23rd September, 2019 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,  
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor J Saunders (Chairman)  
Councillor P Butterill (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors M Addison, S Brookfield, J Buckley, C Bulman, A Gage,  
S Handley, M Houston and D Edwardes

#### **PORTFOLIO HOLDERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor D Flude, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

#### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Louise Hurst, Head of Service: Children in Need and Child Protection Service  
Keith Martin, Head of Service: Cared-for Children and Care Leavers  
Carol Sharples, Early Start Manager  
Alison Stathers-Tracey, Director of Early Help and Prevention

#### **12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barber (substituted for by Councillor Brookfield), Beanland, Hayes and Moran (substituted for by Councillor Edwardes.)

#### **13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

##### **RESOLVED –**

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 June 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **15 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

There were no whipping declarations.

#### **16 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of public present who wished to speak.

## **17 CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON'S STORY**

A case study was outlined to the committee about a Summer-born child (anonymised as 'Child A') who started in reception in September 2018. Their parents had applied for a place at a primary school at which Child A's sibling attended, but had not spoken to the school about attending nursery prior to reception. The school contacted the parents in January 2018 to make the parents aware of the offer of a nursery place.

The parents of Child A wanted them to attend the nursery and so an initial visit was arranged for January. During this visit, Child A presented as a child with significant needs.

An overview of the child's needs was presented to members alongside detailed information as to; what the council did that had worked well; what the council had been worried about; what the impacts on the child had been; and what the council had learned.

Concern was raised by the committee regarding whether the Child A's additional needs could have been identified earlier, and what could be done to ensure earlier identification in similar cases in the future.

Members were advised that the council had already begun reviewing the overall parenting journey; if the eight stages of assessment were embedded, it would be easier for the council to identify any problems at an earlier stage. In addition, there was now a health visitor linked to all settings; the importance of the council working closely with Health Visitors was highlighted.

The committee questioned whether, had more Children Centres and Sure Start services been available to Child A and their parents, would their additional needs have been identified and brought to the council's attention sooner. Members were advised that there was a reliance on parents to come forward and admit when perhaps they needed assistance.

Members questioned whether systems and processes would sufficiently 'flag' to the relevant services if a child had not attended a two-year development review. It was confirmed that this type of monitoring would be put in place. It was also reported that a recommissioning of the 0 to 19 year olds service was due to take place, which presented the council with an opportunity to include within the new commission: a service specification that would highlight any child development checks that had been missed.

### **RESOLVED –**

That Child A's story, and the responses to members' questions, be noted.

## **18 PERFORMANCE SCORECARD**

Consideration was given to the performance scorecard for Quarter 1 of 2019/20. Members raised comments and asked questions in relation to;

- why the number of young people not in employment, education or training had risen;
- when the council might expect the increased number of social workers to positively impact on caseload management;
- why the number of open early health assessments had risen; and
- how many cared-for children were under council care, and whether the recent increase in this number was associated with school holidays.

### **RESOLVED –**

- 1 That the new format and style for the performance scorecard be endorsed.
- 2 That the contents of the scorecard and attached report be noted.

## **19 CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT**

Consideration was given to the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2018/19. The Chairman was pleased to report that each of the council's political groups had signed up to the pledges outlined in the new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-20.

Underpinning these pledges were the five Workstream Groups, which had been established to ensure that the Strategy was delivered effectively. The Chairman reported that members of the Corporate Parenting Committee would be contacted to gauge interest in being part of one of the five Strategy workstreams.

The Chairman and the Portfolio Holder for Children and Families reported that they had been involved in identifying the following priorities which had helped to refresh and improve the Strategy;

- a review of the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Committee;
- continue to develop the training offer for Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee and all other elected Members of the council;
- support and scrutinise the development of the 'Bespoke' project;
- support and scrutinise the review of the council's fostering services; and
- consider the impact of the Social Care Bill.

In addition to this an overview was provided to Members on the 'mocking bird' project by the Acting Head of Service: Cared for Children and Care Leavers.

Concern was raised in respect of the management of independent children's homes. Clarification was sought as to whether or not the committee or the council could ensure that independent children's homes were inspected on a regular basis.

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Families spoke to the importance of all elected members of the council engaging and attending in training on frontline visits. It was reiterated that this training was mandatory for any member that sat on the Corporate Parenting Committee.

**RESOLVED –**

That the report be received.

**20 ANNUAL ADOPTION REPORT**

Consideration was given to the Annual Adoption report, which was intended to fulfil the obligations in Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011), Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011), and Adoption and Children Act (2002), to report to the "executive side" of the local authority.

It was noted that data and information contained within the report was accurate as of 31 March 2019. Members were advised that plans for children were dynamic and pragmatic and as such, the overall picture would have changed since this date.

Members asked questions and raised comments in relation to;

- whether the reported national shortage of adopters had shown signs of improvement or further deterioration;
- what plans the council and partners would try to put in place to prevent the continued deterioration of adoptive families; and
- how some of the figures in relation to adoptive families would look in comparison to those on non-adoptive families.

**RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.

**21 CHANGES TO NHS - CHESHIRE EAST PARTNERSHIP 5 YEAR PLAN**

Consideration was given to the draft Cheshire East Partnership Five-Year Plan. Members gave the following feedback on the Plan, including that;

- there was a good emphasis on mental health issues within the document;
- there was not enough information/detail on children and children's services;

- there was not enough detail on waiting times for autism referral appointments;
- there was not enough detail on the current performance position, local/national benchmarks, and what the council's ambitions and objectives are; and
- there was not enough clarity on how the success of the Plan would be measured during, and at the end of, the five year period.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- 1 That the draft Cheshire East Partnership Five-Year Plan be noted.
- 2 That the committee's feedback be included within the Technical Appendix to the final Plan document.

### **22 ELECTED MEMBER FRONTLINE VISITS TO CHILD IN NEED AND CHILD PROTECTION TEAMS**

Consideration was given to a report that set out proposals on the future arrangements regarding frontline visits to the Child in Need and Child Protection Teams.

It was reported that members on the frontline visit rota had been in place for a long period of time. Of the eight members listed for 2018/19, three were no longer elected members of the council and only two still sat on the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Whilst a number of experienced councillors remained on the rota, the committee felt that there was an opportunity to encourage and enable some of the council's newly elected members to become more involved.

It was suggested that officers email the members of the committee with a list of potential dates for training to be undertaken, should members of the committee wish to participate in frontline visits in the future.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- 1 That the report be noted.
- 2 That the proposals outlined in section 7 of the report be endorsed.

### **23 FORWARD PLAN**

The committee gave consideration to the areas of the forward plan which fell within its remit.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That the forward plan be received.

## **24 WORK PROGRAMME**

The committee reviewed its work programme. It was reported that the spotlight review on Children's Mental Health Services would take place on Wednesday 13 November.

In response to questions from the committee, the Scrutiny Manager advised members that the SEND Task and Finish Group had worked with officers to try and complete its report on the SEND Local Offer for 16 to 25 Year Olds in time to present to the committee at its next meeting on 25 November 2019.

### **RESOLVED –**

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 1.30 pm and concluded at 3.30 pm

Councillor J Saunders (Chairman)