

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 16th April, 2013 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)
Councillor P Edwards (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors S Corcoran, H Davenport, D Newton, R West, J Wray and
A Thwaite (as substitute for Councillor W Fitzgerald)

Apologies

Councillor W Fitzgerald and McCann

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors P Findlow, P Raynes, P Mason and A Moran

OFFICERS PRESENT

Nigel Moorehouse – Head of Early Intervention and Prevention
Kate Rose – Principal Children's Safeguarding Manager
Rachel Musson – Interim Chief Operating Officer
Steve Reading – Principal Accountant
Rachel Bolton – Section 106 Officer
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

26 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

28 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of the existence of a party whip

29 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

30 CHILDREN AND ADULTS SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

Kate Rose and Nigel Moorehouse attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the implications of new statutory guidance for safeguarding children and young people and on the work of the safeguarding unit at Cheshire East.

The committee was informed that new guidance entitled 'Working together to safeguard children' set out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and how practitioners should conduct the assessment of children.

The latest guidance had updated guidance first issued in 1999 which had been updated over the intervening years to reflect changes in the philosophical approach to safeguarding in response, amongst other things, to such issues as the baby P case in Haringey.

The main thrust of the guidance was to place more trust in the professionals involved in safeguarding to keep children safe and to avoid over legislating in this area. The guidance placed greater emphasis on the independency of other agencies as well as the Council in respect of child protection issues.

In response to the guidance, Cheshire East had:

- Transformed social work practice and standards
- Introduced arrangements for the external review of the Council's safeguarding governance arrangements involving a new panel of experts to advise the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)
- Appointed an external chair
- Introduced quarterly reports from the external Chair to the Chief executive, Strategic director and Portfolio holder
- Improved intelligence across agencies to provide assurance regarding effectiveness
- Piloted new methodology for case reviews
- Introduced a pan Cheshire child death review panel independent

The impact of these changes was expected to:

- Move away from target driven practice to child centred assessment based upon outcomes
- Under-pin assessment as continuous process
- Emphasis on provision of early help to have greatest impact
- Reaffirm the need for all agencies to provide early help
- S11 of the Children Act 2004 relating to response to allegations and safe practice will work across all organisations
- A need for a strong challenging role of the Independent Chair of LSCB
- Still with the recognition that how well the various agencies carry out their roles there will still be cases where children will be harmed or die due to abuse or neglect.

In response to a question regarding the mechanisms that were in place to allow the various agencies to work together effectively to ensure early intervention, many of whom worked in different environments, Nigel Moorhouse explained that effective joint working relied upon a number of measures such as the correct application of the standards set in the Council's policies and procedures and those of partner organisations and through performance management. He explained that the Council would soon be launching a new consultation service which would allow individuals to report matters relating to safeguarding of children to the Council whilst retaining their right to remain anonymous.

A further question was asked about the arrangements in place to prevent child grooming.

Kate rose informed the Committee that the Council had a dedicated team dealing with child sexual exploitation, and that extensive work was undertaken with schools about safe relationships.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the presentation be received;
- (b) That the Executive Director for Strategic Commissioning be requested to put arrangements in place for reports to be submitted to this committee from the independent chair on safeguarding issues on an exception basis only, via the children and families portfolio holder;
- (c) That quarterly reports be submitted to this committee to update Members on progress made against the assessment completion and quality impact.

31 SECTION 106 PROGRESS REPORT

The committee considered a report of Rachel Bolton the section 106 monitoring officer providing an update on the general breakdown of section 106 monies currently held by the Council in terms of income and expenditure, together with a list of agreements completed. In addition, a spread sheet containing details of deposits held by the council as at 21 March 2013 was tabled at the meeting.

Rachel explained the process which allowed local ward members to be involved at an early stage in the process and to be invited to pre- application meetings.

In response to a question about what happened to interest accrued to section 106 monies held on deposit, Rachel informed the committee that this was usually covered in the legal agreements, but that where agreements were silent on the issue, interest was transferred to the Council's cash reserves.

Resolved

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That the process by which Local Ward Members are notified of and invited to take part in pre application meetings regarding section 106 agreements be formalised and all Members be informed of the arrangements;
- (c) That electronic versions of the full section 106 spread sheets be made available to all Members of the Council to enable Councillors to monitor section 106 agreements within their respective wards.

32 SCHOOL EXAMINATION DATA

The committee considered the annual education report 2011/12 relating to the overall performance of schools (including academies) and settings during 2011-12 from early years through to post 16.

The report stated that there were 50,119 pupils attending mainstream schools and academies, 269 attended the borough's four special schools and 34 were educated at the pupil referral unit.

In 2012, 74% of children in Cheshire East had achieved a good level of development by the age of 5 which represented an increase in 6 percentage points over the previous year.

The achievement gap between the lowest 20% of pupils and the rest in Cheshire East had continued to narrow. In 2012 this was 25% compared to 32% in 2010. This was lower than nationally and across the North West and statistical neighbours. Cheshire East was ranked third when compared to all local authorities.

Specifically, at key stage 1, Cheshire East was achieving consistently above national averages, and at key stage 2, 85% of pupils achieved level 4+ in English and mathematics, a rise of 4 percentage points on last year in primary schools.

In secondary schools, at key stage 3 Cheshire East was consistently above national averages. At key stage 4, 61.9 % of pupils achieved 5+A*-C grades. However the number of cared for children achieving 5+A*-C grades had dropped slightly compared to the previous year.

The report also indicated that 99.1% of a level students achieved A* to E and just under a quarter achieved A*.

In respect of school attendance and exclusions, the report showed that persistent absentees had fallen significantly since 2011 in both primary and secondary schools.

Resolved

That the report be received.

33 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The committee considered a report of the Borough Solicitor regarding the 2012/2013 work programme.

The Committee reviewed the schedule attached to the report and recommended that the following changes be made:

- Performance Management information be amended to read final outturn
- Budget Monitoring be amended to read final outturn
- Review of New management Structure – date for completion April 2014
- Review of schools and the new Ofsted framework – July 2013
- Review of Academies and primary schools – July 2013

RESOLVED – That the report be received and the changes listed above approved

34 BUDGET SAVINGS

The Committee considered how it would select for specific attention, matters within the 2013/14 budget that were considered to be the most sensitive, critical and difficult to achieve.

The following matters were raised as potential items:

- Cross cutting proposals of -£3.1m – as referred to on page 154 of the February 2013 Council budget report.
- The proposal relating to "Rationalise Commissioned Preventative Services - VCFS" -£350k in Adults in terms of the impact of the reduction as referred to on page 82 of the February 2013 Council Budget Report
- The 'Impact of adjustments in Previous Years' line on the overview (Budget Report - page 4).

In support of the matters outlined above, the Finance Portfolio holder offered to provide a monthly Summary of Financial performance with effect from July 2013.

RESOLVED – That the matters listed above be subject to further investigation when the committee reviews the final outturn budget and performance report in June 2013.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.35 pm

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)