

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 7th May, 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, W Fitzgerald, D Newton, R West,
J Wray and Kelly

1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2013 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Rachel Bailey Children and Families Portfolio Holder
Councillor Phil Hoyland Chairman of Children and Families Policy Development Group
Councillor Ken Edwards – Vice Chairman of Children and Families Policy Development Group

3 OFFICERS PRESENT

Lorraine Butcher - Executive Director of Strategic Commissioning
Tony Crane - Director of Children's Services
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of the existence of a party whip.

6 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

7 OFSTED INSPECTION

Lorraine Butcher and Tony Crane gave a presentation on the inspection undertaken by OFsted of the Council's arrangements for the protection of children, which took place between 11 and 20 March 2013.

The Committee was informed that ofsted judgements were split into 3 categories: Effectiveness of Help, quality of practice and leadership and governance.

The Council had been judged to be adequate in the effectiveness of help and leadership and governance categories and inadequate in respect of quality of practice. This had led to an overall judgement of inadequate.

Lorraine Butcher informed the committee that the judgement should be set in the context of the new regime of Ofsted inspections which were considered to be much more rigorous than had previously been the case and assured the committee that the recent inspection did not suggest that the Council's child protection arrangements had deteriorated since the last inspection, but that the inspection regime had become more robust. The Committee was informed that of the 39 Ofsted inspections published to date, 33% of local authorities had been judged inadequate and of those, 75% had been judged to be inadequate across all categories, whereas this Council had been judged to be inadequate in one category.

Tony Crane informed the committee that the inspection had reviewed the council's arrangements through the 'eyes of a child's journey' and had concentrated on children in need and child's protection issues, not on children in care.

The Ofsted inspection had highlighted variations in the Councils quality of practice.

This was in part a legacy of the high number of case loads inherited by the authority after Local Government Review some four years ago, and the resulting fractured social work teams. The Council had identified that there had been shortfalls in the numbers of social work staff and the immediate response of the Council had been to plug gaps with agency staff. It was conceded that this solution had contributed to some of the shortcomings in practices. However, at no point during the inspection had Ofsted found that any child was at risk of significant harm.

Lorraine explained that an improvement Board would be established in the near future to be chaired independently to further to monitor the review of children in need in practice.

In summary, the Council had acknowledged that the inspection had produced a disappointing outcome, but that the Council was determined to continue to build a culture of accountability and support to drive improvement, the first step of which was to put in place a robust action plan, the details of which were circulated at the meeting.

The implications of the review would be far reaching in terms of the Council's governance and policy development arrangements and it was acknowledged that any future activity of this committee and of the Children and Families Policy Development Group would need to be co-ordinated.

RESOLVED _

- (a) That the presentation be received;
- (b) That the Chairman of this Committee meet the Chairman of the Children and Families PDG to co-ordinate future activity in respect of this matter and to gain an understanding of the role of the proposed improvement board;
- (c) That the Strategic Director be requested to put together some initial thoughts as to where this committee could add greatest value in respect of future scrutiny of the Council's arrangements in respect of child protection;
- (d) That the annual safeguarding report be submitted to this committee in June 2013.

8 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Borough Solicitor regarding the 2012/13 work programme.

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

- Regulation 33 Update – 11 June 2013
- Annual Safeguarding report – new item – June 2013 (If available)
- Multi Agency inspection results – new item – November 2013

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.55 pm

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)