

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 10th September, 2013 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillors S Corcoran, H Davenport, D Newton, R West, J Wray and
C Andrew (substitute)

Apologies

Councillors S Wilkinson, P Edwards W Fitzgerald and Mr J McCann

39 OFFICERS PRESENT

Tony Crane – Director of Children's Services
Alex Thompson – Finance lead – Strategy and Funding
Kim Evans – Licensing Team Leader
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

40 ALSO PRESENT

Councillor R Bailey – Children and Families Portfolio Holder
Councillor P Raynes – Finance Portfolio Holder
Councillor B Moran – Policy and performance Portfolio Holder

41 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED – That Councillor Roger West be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

42 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

44 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

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

45 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

46 **CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING ISSUES -IMPROVEMENT PLAN HIGHLIGHT REPORT.**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children's services providing an update on improvement activity since July 2013 in connection with the Ofsted inspection of children's safeguarding arrangements reported to this Committee in May 2013.

The Director of Children's services explained that the Improvement Notice had not been signed off by the Minister at the DfE but in anticipation of the receipt of the notice, the Council had continued to plan and was carrying out a range of actions to cover the vast majority of the issues identified in the notice.

The committee was reminded that the Ofsted report had looked in detail at four key areas: Workforce, Performance, Major Case Audit and Case Studies. The audit did highlight some inconsistencies and variability in relation to practice and quality some of which could be attributed to the Councils current case management (PARIS) and legacy issues relating to an over reliance on agency staff. The Committee was informed that there were currently 198 social workers in the directorate (175FTE) and that currently there were no vacancies.

The key risks to the Council were identified as:

- Inconsistency of practice continued to be a key issue
- Evidence of recording activity was still too variable
- Whilst the quality of agency social workers had improved, the percentage of permanent staff continued to be high
- A slight dip in the number of Common Assessment Framework's (CAF's)
- A need to ensure the improvement plan incorporated the requirements of the improvement notice

The Chairman reminded Members that at its meeting held on 7 May 2013 in relation to the Ofsted inspection into the Council's safeguarding arrangements; the Committee had asked the Strategic Director to bring to the committee suggestions as to where the committee could add greatest value in connection with the future scrutiny of the Council's arrangements on child protection.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the report be received and the progress outlined in the report noted;
- (b) That the Director of Children's Service be requested to report back to a future meeting with suggestions as to where the committee can add greatest value to the scrutiny of the Council's arrangements in respect of child protection;
- (c) That Director of Children's Services be also requested to provide a demographic breakdown of the staff within the safeguarding unit;

- (d) That in future, the Director of Children's Services be requested to produce reports which focus on matters of particular concern, i.e. those displaying a 'red light' and include a commentary as to what improvements are required and identify where progress has been made.

47 LICENSING POLICY

The Committee considered a report of the Licensing Team leader relating to a revised licensing policy which under the Licensing Act 2003 was required to be reviewed every 5 years.

The Council's first statement of Licensing Policy came into effect in 2009. The statement of Licensing Policy established a local framework for decision making when considering applications for relevant permissions, or variations to existing terms and conditions.

The Committee was being consulted as part of the formal consultation arrangements.

RESOLVED - That revised Licensing Policy be supported.

48 BUDGET TIMETABLE REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Chief Operating Officer setting out the Budget setting engagement process 2014/15.

The timetable included a proposal for the committee to be formally consulted on the draft budget during week commencing 13 January 2014.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be received. and arrangement be put in place to re-arrange the January 2014 meeting of the is committee to a new date during week commencing 13 January 2014 to fall in line with the budget engagement process timetable;
- (b) That the scheduled January 2014 meeting be re-arranged to take place during week commencing 13 January 2014 to fall in line with the budget engagement process timetable.

49 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the current municipal year.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.25 pm

Councillor R West (Chairman)