

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Children, Families and Adult Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

held on Monday, 1st September, 2014 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor P Hoyland (Chairman)
Councillor A Moran (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors R Domleo, I Faseyi, D Flude, G Merry and H Murray

Apologies

Councillors C Andrew and J Saunders

1 ALSO PRESENT

Rachel Bailey – Children Families and Adult safeguarding Portfolio Holder
Rhoda Bailey – Deputy Cabinet Member
Stewart Gardiner - Deputy Cabinet Member

2 OFFICERS PRESENT

Tony Crane – Director of Children's Services
Mark Bayley – Principal Manager, Quality Assurance
Nigel Moorhouse – Head of Service Social Care
Fintan Bradley – Head of Service Strategy Planning and Performance
Ann Gadsden – Monitoring and Intervention Manager
Gill Betton – Children's Improvement and Intervention Manager

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

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

5 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

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

6 RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHOOLS AND RAISING ACHIEVEMENT

Councillor Ken Edwards attended the meeting and addressed the committee in respect of this matter.

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Manager: Standards and Learning concerning relationships with schools and the raising achievement plan for Cheshire East.

Over the past 5 years, the Council had improved education standards in all areas resulting in a position where 85% of all learners attended a school which was a good or outstanding. However, the Council and its partners were still committed to raising standards even further to ensure that the best educational opportunities were available to all.

Although the Council retained a statutory duty to promote high standards, ensuring fair access to educational opportunities, and promoting young peoples learning potential wherever they were educated, it was acknowledged that the Council's influence in respect of academies was limited. However, academies were monitored through a regional schools commissioning structure. Cheshire East was a member of the West Midlands group.

In response to a question about school funding, the Committee was informed that 94% of government funding went directly to schools, leaving the Council with a sum in the region of £18 million allocated to the school programme.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That an informal Members awareness session be arranged to be held before the start of the next meeting of the committee on 6 October 2014 to explore the main issues affecting school improvement.

7 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Nigel Moorhouse gave a presentation on recent changes made in respect of the Council's the recruitment and retention arrangements for social workers. The presentation provided an update on the progress of a project that the former Children and Families Policy Development Group (PDG) had been involved in during the latter part of 2013 running into 2014.

The PDG had interviewed a number of social workers in 2013 and had made a number of recommendations regarding the improvement of working conditions which included amongst other things upgrading ICT for social workers.

Nigel explained that the Council's recruitment programme had to be understood in the national context of there being a poor supply of competent agency social

workers and managers, which had led to a high churn of agency social workers in 2013/14.

A recruitment action group had been established within the Council which had led to the social work service in Cheshire East being re-branded.

Working conditions had now improved significantly with dedicated office space, improved ICT and reduced caseloads although it was acknowledged that a third recruitment campaign was still required to fill a number of vacancies.

The current position was that 16 social workers and 3 practice managers had been recruited. All manager posts in Macclesfield were now filled and those in Crewe were expected to be filled by 1 October 2014.

RESOLVED – That the Committees appreciation for the progress made in respect of the recruitment and retention of social workers be placed on record.

8 POTENTIAL AREAS FOR SCRUTINY INVOLVEMENT

Tony Crane outlined some key topics within the Children's directorate which were considered appropriate for scrutiny activity, some of which already featured in the committee's draft work programme.

The topics were:

- Safeguarding and in particular corporate parenting especially in connection with the Council's new delivery vehicles such as the Council's new Leisure Trust;
- Social worker HR Policies;
- SEN Policy – development of a policy in line with new legislation
- LSCB – the effectiveness of and the Council's relationship.

RESOLVED – That the matters above be included in the Committees work programme.

9 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee reviewed its work programme having regard to the discussions held under the previous item.

The Committee suggested that the item to develop an SEN policy under the new legislation would benefit from the input of the Director of Public health.

In connection with the item regarding home to school transport, the committee expressed the view that although it was still important to follow up the work of the 2011 task and finish group, there was now a wider issue for the committee to look at, particularly if the Council pursued its intention to set up a transport company.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the work programme be updated to include the additional items outlined by the Head of Children's Services;
- (b) That an update report be submitted to the next meeting of the committee on the home to school transport recommendations;
- (c) That the item relating to school allocation of places in the north of the borough be deleted;
- (d) That 6 monthly progress reports be submitted to the Committee on safeguarding issues;
- (e) That a standing item regarding the Improvement board be placed on all future agendas

10 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered items listed in the current forward plan.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be received.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.45 pm

Councillor P Hoyland (Chairman)