

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

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

held on Monday, 27th January, 2020 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

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

Councillors M Beanland, D Brown, C Bulman, S Handley, M Houston,
A Moran, A Critchley and P Williams

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor K Flavell, Portfolio for Children and Families

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Alison Stathers-Tracey, Director of Early Help and Prevention
Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14-19 Skills
Mark Palethorpe, Executive Director of People
Jacquie Sims, Director of Children's Social Care

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor James Barber (substituted for by Councillor Anthony Critchley), and Councillor June Buckley (substituted for by Councillor Phil Williams.)

38 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED-

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 November 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

40 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no whipping declarations.

41 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

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

42 SEND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION UPDATE

Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14-19 skills, attended the meeting to update the committee on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Written Statement of Action (WSOA).

Cheshire East Council was asked to produce a WSOA in respect of weaknesses that needed to be addressed in the areas of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans and Autism Pathways. These weaknesses were identified following a visit by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in March 2018. Ofsted and the CQC were expected to revisit within 18 months from the sign off date for the WSOA.

The committee were advised that the revisit would only take into account progress made and the rating would either be 'making sufficient progress' or 'not making sufficient progress' there was no expectation to have resolved all weaknesses at this stage.

A summary of key priorities and areas for improvement were discussed. Mark Palethorpe, Executive Director of People, assured the committee that there have been a number of scrutiny checkpoints related to SEND that included two task and finish reports on SEND reform from this committee, plus overview from external agencies.

There was some discussion by the committee and questions were answered on SEN support to children and young people, the consultation and engagement on the WSOA and the Action Plan and SEND funding.

There were a couple of areas where the Director agreed to provide data to the committee after the meeting. These were: the number of educational psychologists employed by the council as whole time equivalents and the number of children and young people with formal diagnosis on the new autism pathway.

RESOLVED- That:

- 1) the Director of Education and 14-19's be thanked for her attendance and update;
- 2) the data be provided to the committee after the meeting as agreed;
- 3) the pilot of the SEND work be added to this committee's work programme post Ofsted and CQC revisit or in 12 months' time, whichever happens soonest; and
- 3) the recommendations be endorsed.

43 LOCALITY WORKING PROGRESS REPORT

Alison Stathers-Tracey, Director of Early Help and Prevention attended the meeting, to update the committee on progress to date to create a new way of working called 'Together in Communities' across agencies working with children and families in Cheshire East.

The committee were advised that following consultation with young people, the word 'locality' had been replaced with 'together in communities' that better reflected the meaning of locality in plain English.

Three workshops had been planned across the borough aimed at frontline staff and managers from all partner agencies. These workshops aimed to build relationships with other agencies and would be held on:

5 March 2020 9.15-12.30, Oakenclough Children's Centre, Wilmslow;
26 February 2020 9.15-12.30, Brooklands Suite, Holmes Chapel Community Centre, Holmes Chapel; and
25 February 2020 9.15-12.30, Crewe Alex Football Club, Crewe.

RESOLVED-

- 1) That the Director of Early Help and Prevention be thanked for her attendance and update to this committee;
- 2) That the report be received and recommendations be endorsed.

44 FAMILY FOCUS (TROUBLED FAMILIES) RECOVERY REPORT

The committee considered a report which provided an update on the continued improvement journey for the Council and its partners in delivering the National Troubled Families Programme. Troubled Families were defined as those that had problems and caused problems to the community around them, putting high costs on the public sector, in Cheshire East this programme was called Family Focus.

The committee were advised by Alison Stathers-Tracey, Director for Early Help and Prevention, that the council received a grant plus a 'Payment by Results' (PbR) award. A number of families needed to be allocated to a programme and payment was made based on results. The council was subject to a spot check visit by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in September 2019, the results of this check were positive and the council was rated the second highest performing in the North West.

There was some discussion about the end date to the programme set as March 2020 and a possible national extension of 12 months, the expected number of families who could be supported in the next period and the realistic period of time for sustained successes. There were a couple of areas where the Director agreed to provide data to the committee after the meeting. These were: to provide a link to published findings by MHCLG and to the categories the family must be meeting to ensure sustained progress.

RESOLVED- That:

- 1) the Director of Early Help and Prevention be thanked for her attendance and update to the committee;
- 2) the additional data be circulated to this committee; and
- 3) the report be noted.

45 INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO CHILDREN IN NEED

Jackie Sims, Director of Children's Social Care attended the meeting and presented the report on innovative approaches for Children in Need.

The Committee had some discussion about those identified as living on the edge of care, the increase in awareness nationally in identification of exploitation, the

clearer parameters to support those children on the edge of care and the addition of a fifth social work team.

RESOLVED- That

- 1) the Director for Children's Social Care be thanked for her attendance and update to this committee; and
- 2) the report be received and recommendations be endorsed.

46 OUTCOME OF OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHESHIRE EAST LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ILACS)

Jackie Sims, Director of Children's Social Care, attending the meeting to present an update to the committee on the outcome of the Ofsted Standard Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) undertaken in November 2019. The inspection was a standard inspection and involved one inspector who reviewed effectiveness of practice and two specialist inspectors who reviewed adoption and fostering and education. Prior to this, the council had been subject to an inspection in 2015 and a focussed visit in 2018.

The rating from Ofsted was 'requires improvement to be good', the committee was advised that by comparison, in 2015, the council had been rated as 'inadequate' and at that time the score was only just achieved, whereas this time the council almost achieved a 'good' rating.

The committee was advised on the findings by Ofsted, that included strengths and areas for improvement. The next steps were to communicate findings, write an action plan for areas for development and to prepare for the Annual Conversation with Ofsted in February 2020.

The committee commended the hard work done by staff involved in the Ofsted report and acknowledged how quickly the Action Plan had been produced.

RESOLVED-

- 1) That the contents of the Ofsted report be noted.
- 2) That the Action Plan be endorsed.
- 3) That the opportunity to scrutinise the Action Plan be added to the Work Programme for this committee.

47 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.

48 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee reviewed its work programme. It was noted that the 23 April 2020 had been set as the April meeting date.

RESOLVED-

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.30 pm and concluded at 3.55 pm

Councillor J Saunders (Chairman)