

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

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

held on Monday, 23rd November, 2020 at Virtual Meeting

PRESENT

Councillor J Saunders (Chairman)
Councillor C Bulman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors M Addison, J Barber, M Beanland, D Brown, J Buckley, P Butterill, A Critchley (substitute), A Moran, L Smith and N Wylie

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor K Flavell, Portfolio for Children and Families

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Matthew Adam, Children and Young Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing Transformation Lead (NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group)
Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care
Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14-19 Skills
David Leadbetter, Head of Service - Children's Commissioning
Madeleine Lowry, Associate Director of Operations (Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)
Kate Rose, Head of Service for Children's Safeguarding
Alison Stathers-Tracey, Director of Early Help and Prevention

36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S Handley, who was substituted for by Councillor A Critchley.

37 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 28 September 2020, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

39 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of a party whip.

40 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

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

41 CHILD / YOUNG PERSON'S STORY

The committee watched a video that had been put together by Cheshire Without Abuse, which highlighted some of the personal stories from domestic abuse sufferers in Cheshire East.

Members noted the important work that Cheshire Without Abuse, the council and other partners continued to do to reduce domestic abuse in the borough, and support domestic abuse victims.

RESOLVED –

That the video update be noted.

42 COVID-19 UPDATE

Consideration was given to the committee's standing update on the Covid-19 pandemic and how the work the council had undertaken to respond to, and recover from, it.

Members asked questions and put comments in relation to;

- the up-to-date figures on school attendance;
- why the rates of elective home education cases had risen so significantly in recent months;
- whether grants from central government had been received to ensure that all elective home educated students had access to adequate broadband and computer access; and
- what the uptake of PPE had been from schools and whether there had been sufficient uptake of free packages of PPE.

RESOLVED –

That the update be received and noted.

43 CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE SCORECARD - QUARTER 2, 2020/21

The committee considered the performance data relating to Children's Services from Quarter 2 of the 2020/21 municipal year.

Members asked questions in relation to the council's numbers of Children's Social Care staff, and whether the low level of 0-2 year olds engaged at Children's Centres had been a consequence of the pandemic.

RESOLVED –

That the Performance Scorecard be noted.

44 COVID-19 AND CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Consideration was given to a report on the type and range of support that was available to children and young people struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.

Questions and comments were put in relation to;

- what could be done to help to address children and young people's mental health needs before they reach a point of crisis; and
- whether, since the committee's Spotlight Review on Children's Mental Health Services (24 February 2020), services had been made more equitable across the borough of Cheshire East;

The committee felt that it would be pertinent for the Health and Adult Social Care and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive a similar update on the offer of services for adults and older people experiencing mental health and wellbeing struggles.

RESOLVED –

- 1 That the report and update be received and noted.
- 2 That the Health and Adult Social Care and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be recommended to request an update on the offer of services for adults and older people experiencing mental health and wellbeing struggles.

45 DOMESTIC ABUSE

The committee gave consideration to a report on how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on domestic abuse cases in Cheshire East.

Members asked questions and put comments in relation to;

- the role of Cheshire Police and how partners have worked together to tackle domestic abuse in Cheshire East;
- the inequitable financial formula for the Cheshire region local authorities, which meant that all four councils received the same funding, despite Cheshire East having the greatest number of cases and demand on services; and
- whether the grant funding – due to end in March 2021 – was likely to be continued, or was at risk of being lost.

RESOLVED –

That the update be received and noted.

46 NEET SUMMIT AND ACTION PLAN

The committee received a report on the NEET (people not in employment, education or training) Summit. The report highlighted how the council has worked to bring together national and local initiatives to ensure that young people are able to make choices about their short-term and longer-term ambitions as they move in to adulthood.

The committee noted that the NEET Summit sounded positive and productive, and that getting feedback directly from the recipients of the programme would further help the council and partners to understand their views, wants and the kind of roles they would be interested in.

RESOLVED –

That the update be received and noted.

47 HIGH NEEDS FUNDING

Consideration was given to an update on the work that had been carried out through the Schools Forum to develop a proposed new model for allocating High Needs Top-up Funding, along with the details of the planned next steps for this work.

Members asked questions and put comments in relation to;

- the fact that survey numbers didn't reflect an overwhelming endorsement of the proposal;
- what amount of additional resources the financial implications noted in the report would require, and whether the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted this; and
- what the consequences of any decreases in funding to schools (in relation to Covid-19) had been, or would be, on children and education performance.

RESOLVED –

That the update be received and noted.

48 FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to the council's Forward Plan of key decisions.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

49 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The committee reviewed its work programme, and discussed in particular, the need to ensure that the committee allows itself appropriate time to properly scrutinise the Children's Service Directorate Pre-Budget 2021/22 Consultation.

RESOLVED –

- 1 That the work programme be noted.
- 2 That the Scrutiny Officer liaise with officers to determine how the committee's remaining meetings and their proposed agendas could be managed to ensure that sufficient time could be apportioned to the various items.

The meeting commenced at 1.30 pm and concluded at 4.14 pm

Councillor J Saunders (Chairman)