

## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

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

held on Monday, 6th October, 2014 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,  
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

#### **PRESENT**

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

Councillors C Andrew, R Domleo, I Faseyi, D Flude, G Merry and J Saunders

#### **ALSO PRESENT**

Tony Crane – Director of Children's Services  
Fintan Bradley - Head of Service for Education Strategy, Planning and Performance  
James Morley – Scrutiny Officer

#### **11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies

#### **12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

#### **13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **14 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME**

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

#### **15 SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS**

The Committee received a presentation about Special Education Needs (SEN) from Fintan Bradley, Head of Service for Education Strategy, Planning and Performance. During the presentation members of the Committee asked questions. The following points were made:

- Key changes to SEN commissioning, assessment processes, and education, health and care (EHC) plans had been introduced in September 2014 by the Children and Families Care Act 2014.
- There were new duties for health commissioners in the delivery of education, health and care plans.
- Localised SEN Teams, with focus on a particular area, had been created as a change from using a single Borough wide team.

- Families and young people had an option to have a personal budget with their EHC plan. So far there had been a low uptake of personal budgets; the Council provided support to those with personal budgets to ensure they were used effectively to achieve the goals of the EHC plan.
- Council's were required to publish a "local offer" which was clear and transparent about services that were available to users in and around the Borough. Information Cheshire East (iCE) was an online database on the Council's website which service users could use to find relevant services available in their areas. Schools and providers included on iCE were given access to the system and training to ensure their respective information was available and up to date.
- So far the Council had done everything required by the new Act on time. The Council still required an SEN Policy which Fintan suggested would be developed with the assistance and direction of the Committee. It was suggested that a small task and finish group be established.

RESOLVED:

- (a) The presentation be noted.
- (b) That a task and finish group be established to consider the development of a Special Educational Needs Policy with the aim of presenting a report back to the Committee by February 2015.
- (c) That Fintan Bradley and Tony Crane be requested to provide initial suggestions for the scope of the task and finish group's work to be considered at the group's first meeting.

## 16 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The Committee received a report by Fintan Bradley providing an update on Home to School Transport following a Cabinet decision in April 2012 to withdraw provision of free transport for children attending denominational schools through parental choice on the grounds of religion or faith.

During the discussion of the report the following points were made:

- The risks that had been identified at the time of the decision had not manifested themselves and pupil churn had been minimal.
- Anecdotally schools which were now providing their own transport arrangements were able to do so a lot better and cheaper than previously.
- Work on Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport changes had not yet been carried out. At this stage it was considered best to wait until the changes brought about by the Children and Families Act 2014 had become embedded before considering changes to SEN transport.

- The implementation of Transport Services Solutions Ltd (TSSL) was not going to impact on the Council's statutory duties regarding home to school transport. The Council had produced legally binding service level agreements with TSSL which ensured the Council's statutory responsibilities were fulfilled.
- The Committee approved of the Cabinet's previous decision in April 2012 and was pleased that the implementation of the decision had been successful and provided good outcomes.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the task and finish group established under item 5 of the agenda be requested to consider special education needs transport policy as part of its review.

## **17 IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

Tony Crane, Director of Children's Services, provided an oral update on the work of the Improvement Board and fielded questions from the Committee. During the discussion the following points arose:

- The Improvement Board had been set up approximately twelve months ago by the Department for Education following the Council's failed inspection of child protection by Ofsted.
- The Improvement Board had nearly completed all recommendations from Ofsted's.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

## **18 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee gave consideration to its Work Programme. The Chairman proposed that in light of recent events that had drawn substantial media attention it would be useful to consider an item on Child Sexual Exploitation to reassure the public that the problems experienced in other parts of the country recently did not exist in Cheshire East and that appropriate controls were in place. It was suggested that the November meeting of the Committee be used for an informal workshop to understand the current situation with input from partners such as Cheshire Police.

It was suggested that the Committee receive an update on the response to scrutiny reports on Care Leavers previously submitted to Cabinet at the December meeting.

The Committee agreed that the item on building a relationship with the Local Children's Safeguarding Board be linked to the next six monthly safeguarding update, a date for which had yet to be agreed.

Under the Council's previous overview and scrutiny arrangements the Children and Families Policy Development Group had carried out a series of interviews with social workers to assess how the Council could improve its recruitment and

retention of social workers; it was agreed that the Committee would build on this work by conducting further interviews with social workers in November 2014.

It was suggested that an item on Elected Home Education, where parents chose to home school their child, be added to the Work Programme to examine how the Council identified children at risk when there was no contact with a school or council services.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be updated as follows:

- The item on relationships with schools was completed at this meeting
- The item on Care Leavers be received at the December meeting
- Members of the Committee will take part in interviews with social workers in relation to recruitment and retention of staff
- The Home to school transport item was completed at this meeting
- Items on Child Sexual Exploitation and Elected Home Education be added to the work programme
- A task and finish group looking at special educational needs has been created
- The item on public health's responsibility for 5-19 year old be received in December

## **19 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee examined the latest version of the Forward Plan

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted

The meeting commenced at 2.07 pm and concluded at 4.01 pm

Councillor P Hoyland (Chairman)