

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 June 2017

Present:-

Councillors R Hannaford (Chairman), S Aves, J Brazil, E Brennan, C Channon, J Hawkins, L Hellyer, R Hosking, T Inch, J Mathews, A Saywell, D Sellis and M Squires

Apologies:-

Councillors F Biederman and C Mabin

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillor McInnes

* 1 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the People's Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 March 2017 be signed as a correct record.

* 2 **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

* 3 **Public Participation**

There were no oral representations received at the meeting from a member of the public.

* 4 **Overview of Children's Services**

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services (CP/17/23) presenting an overview of Children's Services in Devon including the number of statutory functions carried out by the County Council aimed at children and young people; Early Years provision; Public Health Nursing Services; Children's Centres; School Admissions and School Place Planning; improving educational outcomes for vulnerable groups; Youth Offending Service and Children's Social Care Service.

The Chief Officer undertook to provide Members with details of the partner agencies that work with the County Council on Children's Social Care.

* 5 **Re-Commissioning of Children's Centres**

(Councillor McInnes, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills, attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee).

(Councillors Hannaford and Brennan declared a personal interest in this matter by virtue of being a Member of the West Exe Children's Centre Advisory Board, and being a trained breastfeeding peer support worker with Action for Children and a parent of a child registered at Beacon Heath Childrens Centre, respectively).

The Committee received a Report from the Chief Officer for Children's Services (CS/17/22) on the future commissioning of the Children's Centre Service to be delivered under a single provider contract with an extension of the age range from 0 to 5, to children eight years and under.

Members' discussion points with the Chief Officer included:

- increased engagement of local Councillors with Children's Centre in their Divisions to raise awareness and signpost families to services;
- continuity of services and investment in onward provision;
- additional support for hard to reach families and access to services and provision;
- staff transfers to a single contract provider;
- services provided centrally across the contract by a single provider rather than by individual Centres;
- assurances over financial considerations offered by a new contract.

The Chief Officer undertook to circulate to Members the draft Children's Centre Services specification document and to ask Children's Centres to invite their local Councillor to attend and become involved with their Centres. A copy of the Impact Assessment was circulated at the meeting and attached to these minutes.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hannaford and **SECONDED** by Councillor Sellis and

RESOLVED that a Task Group be convened to consider the pre-procurement process and recommissioning of Children's Centres.

* **6** **Service Review: Children's Social Work**

(Councillor McInnes, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills, attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee).

The Committee received a Report from the Chief Officer for Children's Services (CS/17/20) on the outcome of a service review of Children's Services following a detailed self-assessment undertaken in early 2017 followed by an independent service review in May 2017. The Council was currently judged by Ofsted as 'requires improvement to be good' and the Service was working hard to achieve this. The Report identified key areas of strength as well as the 10 key areas for improvement within Children's Services, including Early Help and Children in Need.

The Chief Officer also highlighted difficulties around workforce such as modernisation and staff retention; with specific areas of concern around recruitment in North Devon.

Members' discussions points with the Chief Officer included:

- concerns around the previously high reliance on agency staff and the effect on staff morale, specifically in North Devon;
- the process of a council achieving a 'good' rating from Ofsted;
- training received by new workers, including a one year training development course to help improve the skills and staff retention;
- the Independent Advisor for Children's Scrutiny role.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hannaford and **SECONDED** by Councillor Sellis and

RESOLVED

- a) that the 2017/18 Improvement Plan be submitted to a future meeting and the progress for of the three priorities for accelerated improvement be reviewed in the Autumn of 2017;
- b) that arrangements be made for the Committee to visit teams in North Devon in Autumn 2017 to satisfy themselves that improvements were embedded and that resources were sufficient to the task;
- c) that a Scrutiny Masterclass session on Early help be provided.

* 7 **Education Performance Report**

The Committee received the Education Performance Report from the Chief Officer for Children's Services (CS/17/21) on the latest performance measures within Education and Learning. Key areas highlighted within the Report and by the Chief Officer included:

- take up of Early Years funding for two year olds;
- 96% of parents allocated first school preference and Primary and Secondary level;
- approximately 7,000 in-year applications also processed by the Admissions Team;
- overall absence rates remained low across the County;
- high volume of requests for Statutory Assessment;
- improved rates of transfers from Statements to Education, Health and Care Plans;
- 92% of schools are judged Good or Outstanding.

* 8 **Election of Commissioning Liaison Member**

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hannaford, **SECONDED** by Councillor Mathews, and

RESOLVED that Councillor Hosking be appointed as the Commissioning Liaison Member for the Children's Scrutiny Committee

* 9 **Children's Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

RESOLVED that the current outline Work Programme be approved subject to inclusion of the following topics for future consideration:

(a) Re-Commissioning of Children's Centre Task Group – comprising of Councillors Hannaford, Brennan, Hellyer, Hosking and Sellis.

(b) Emotional Health and Wellbeing Task Group – comprising of Councillors Channon, Aves, Hellyer and Saywell.

[NB: The Scrutiny Work Programme was available on the Council's website at http://www.devon.gov.uk/scrutiny_programme.htm

and the Council/Cabinet Forward Plan is available at http://www.devon.gov.uk/forward_plan]

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 4.45 pm