

## CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 March 2021

### Present:

Councillors R Hannaford (Chair), S Aves, F Biederman, J Brazil, C Channon, G Gribble, J Hawkins, L Hellyer, R Hosking, A Saywell, M Squires, A Connett, P Sanders and Mrs C Mabin (Church of England Diocesan representative)

### Apologies:

Councillors D Sellis and T Inch

### Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25:

Councillor J McInnes

#### \* 209 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meetings held on 25 January 2021 were signed as correct records.

#### \* 210 **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

#### \* 211 **Public Participation**

There were no oral representations from members of the public.

#### \* 212 **New Chief Officer**

The Chair introduced Melissa Caslake who was the Council's new Chief Officer for Children's Services who started in role on 1 February 2021, having previously been Chief Officer of Children's Services for two London boroughs and latterly with national safeguarding at the Church of England. Melissa had ties with Devon, having completed her studies at Exeter University.

Members were pleased to welcome Melissa and looked forward to working with her in the future.

#### \* 213 **Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Officer updated Members as to the Work Programme, noting that the next Standing Overview Group would be on 8 April 2021.

\* **214**      **School Return Update**

The Head of Education and Learning updated Members on the return to School which included the following points:-

- Pupils had returned to school on 8 March 2021.
- Positive feedback had been received across the whole county from Headteachers, parents and pupils saying it was good to be back!
- Attendance across the county for the first week back was good and showed: All schools 95%, All schools Eligible Children Only 96%, Primary 97% (98% on following Monday), Secondary 95%, Special 91%, EHCPs 89%; Social Worker 88%, and Children in Care 91%.
- Secondary schools had been required to roll out lateral flow testing and across the whole county there had been a high rate of testing.
- PPE equipment was being delivered directly to schools and could be re-ordered online by them, additionally, face coverings had also been provided.
- It was hoped to have all children returned to school after Easter.

Members noted and welcomed the additional funding obtained (£1.8m) to ensure support was available for those children who were more anxious than others in returning to school, through e.g. access to youth services, counselling, and mental health and wellbeing.

Members wished to record their gratitude to all teaching staff for their hard work over the past year.

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

**RESOLVED** that the Head of Education and Learning write to all of Devon's teaching staff to express the Committee's appreciation and gratitude for the hard work undertaken by them over the past 12 months.

**215**      **Child Exploitation**

Inspector S Arliss, Exeter Sector Inspector and Ms K Gold, Manager of Missing Persons Team for Exeter, East & Mid Devon from the Devon and Cornwall Police gave a presentation on Child Exploitation. The presentation covered the following:-

- What are County Lines?
- How are Children 'recruited'?

- How are Children used?
- Scale of Threat
- Disruption/Safeguarding tactics
- Threats and Trends
- What difference can you make?

The Chair thanked Inspector Arliss and Ms Gold for their attendance and useful presentation.

A copy of the presentation would be circulated to Members.

**216      Department for Education - Commissioner's Update**

The Committee received a presentation from Commissioner Eleanor Brazil on a six month review of progress, which included recommendations to the Council and its partners; and recommendations to the Minister and Department for Education.

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

**RESOLVED** that the Committee endorse the Commissioner's recommendations to the Minister and Department for Education as presented, namely:-

- (a) As there are adequate arrangements in place to drive improvement forward, there is no need to commission an additional Commissioner review, or to consider any alternative delivery and governance arrangements for children's social care.
- (b) The role of Commissioner in Devon should be retained for a further period of six months to provide support, advice and challenge to the leadership and to ensure continuity during a time of transition to a new DCS and new Head of Children's Social Care. The Commissioner should continue to attend the Improvement Partnership.
- (c) The Commissioner should provide regular updates to the Department for Education and lead a review of progress within six months.

**217      Education and Inclusion Final Outcomes**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services (CS/21/04) on the Future arrangements for the provision of Education and Inclusion Services, which had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 10 March 2021 where it resolved:

"(a) that the outcomes of the consultation and engagement process that has taken place over the past 15 months be noted.

(b) that following expiry or termination of the existing service contracts with Babcock Learning and Development Partnership LLP the Education and Inclusion Services be brought into direct delivery by the Council, through the Education and Learning teams.

(c) that authorisation be given to the County Treasurer, County Solicitor, and Head of Digital Transformation & Business Support (in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member) to:

(i) determine the Council's preferred option for the future of the LLP after the existing service contract for Learner Services has come to an end;

(ii) enter into discussions with Babcock Education Holdings Ltd to agree the future of the LLP; and

(iii) execute all legal and financial agreements necessary to effect any decisions or agreements reached with regard to the future of the LLP;

(d) that in the event that the LLP is wound up or otherwise ceases to provide the traded services, that authorisation be given to the Chief Officer for Children's Services (in consultation with the County Treasurer, County Solicitor, Head of Digital Transformation & Business Support, Head of Education & Learning, the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Leader of the Council) to consider the future of appropriate traded services in accordance with the commitment provided at paragraph 3.17 in the Report and recognising that the future of the services will be subject to further consultation and scrutiny, as appropriate and Cabinet in due course."

## 218 **Commissioning Liaison Member Review**

The Committee considered the Commissioning Liaison Member Role Review, which was being presented to all three Scrutiny Committees, recommending that the role continue.

The Chair thanked the current Commissioning Liaison Member, Councillor Richard Hosking, for his hard work and dedication to the role.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Saywell, **SECONDED** by Councillor Aves and

**RESOLVED** that the new Council continue the role of electing one or two Commissioning Liaison Members for each Scrutiny Committee.

## 219 **Commissioning Liaison Member Briefing**

The Committee noted the Report of the Commissioning Liaison Member, Councillor Richard Hosking, which outlined the Commissioning programme and priorities for the year ahead.

**220      Children's Standing Overview Group**

The Committee noted the Report of the Children's Scrutiny Standing Overview Group of 21 January and 16 February 2021.

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

The Meeting started at 2.25 pm and finished at 4.40 pm