

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 April 2022

Present:-

Councillors R Hannaford (Chair), S Aves, J Brazil, P Bullivant, J Hawkins, F Letch, L Samuel, P Sanders (Vice-Chair) and M Squires

Councillors J Bradford, J Wilton - Love and C Channon (all remotely)

Apologies:-

Councillor L Hellyer and C Mabin

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillors A Leadbetter and J Bailey (remotely)

* **39** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2022 be signed as a correct record.

* **40** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

* **41** **Public Participation**

There were no oral representations from members of the public.

* **42** **Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter**

(Councillors A Leadbetter and J Bailey attended in accordance with Standing Order 25 and spoke to this item)

The special meeting had been called by the Chair (in accordance with Standing Order 22) to allow timely scrutiny of the Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter (dated 9 March 2022, attached to the agenda) and its findings in advance of the next ordinary meeting on 14 June 2022.

The Letter summarised the findings of the monitoring visit to Devon Children's Services on 2 and 3 February 2022. This had been the second monitoring visit since the local authority had been judged inadequate in January 2020. It followed a monitoring visit in September 2020, and a subsequent focused visit to Devon in May 2021 to assess the quality of social work practice during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Areas covered by the visit Inspectors were a review of the progress made in the following areas of concern identified at the last inspection:

- Making sure that decisions taken by the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) are acted on.
- Professional curiosity and the quality of assessments.
- The quality of recorded management oversight and critical challenge.

The Letter detailed the headline findings and evaluation of progress and the positive progress to date and areas which required further development and improvement.

Members asked a series of detailed questions relating to the findings, progress to date and future actions and review.

The Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Officer - Head of Children's Social Care; and Deputy Chief Officer - Head of Children's Health and Wellbeing; and the Cabinet Member (Children's Services and Schools) responded to the series of questions from Members which related to: 'front door' key Indicators and key performance indicators (including timeliness, prioritisation and risk management), current plans and objectives and the progress already made, past performance and the new leadership team and arrangements and partnership working (with Schools, children's centres and police for example); recruitment and retention and support for social workers, control of their case-loads and professional development and the role of support staff (Early Help), forthcoming planned discussions and self-evaluation processes with Ofsted in May 2022 and further annual inspections on other service areas in June 2022. The Members commended the role of the Chief Executive as the new Chair of the Improvement Board.

In conclusion, Members commended the longer term objective (by circa 2024) to establish the Service as 'good' or 'outstanding' in alignment with the County Council's strategic objective for the best outcomes for children and families in Devon.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor R Hannaford; and **SECONDED** by Councillor P Sanders and

RESOLVED

(a) that the Cabinet Member and Senior Leaders be thanked for their involvement in this special meeting;

(b) that the Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter of the 9th March 2022 be welcomed and the comments made by Ofsted on the improvements made and the new

Senior Leaders in place to address areas where further improvement is required, be recognised;

(c) that the commitment to the service expressed by the Cabinet Member and Chief Executive in order to get to a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' Service be supported so that families, children and young people across Devon can be assured and feel confident in Children's Services; and .

(d) that the resulting immediate actions be approved

(i) the latest Improvement Plan and Roadmap be shared with Members;

(ii) the Chief Officer/Cabinet Member report back to the Committee on the Annual Conversation with Ofsted; and

(iii) the Self-Evaluation Framework be shared with Members when appropriate.

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

The Meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.05 pm