

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 July 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr R Burton – Chairman

Cllr L Lewis – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr E Coope, Cllr J Kelly, Cllr L Northover, Cllr S Phillips,
Cllr M White, Cllr L-J Evans, Cllr R Maidment, Cllr B Dunlop and
Cllr P Hilliard

Co-Opted Members: S Welch, Academy Parent Governor Representative

Also in attendance: Cllr S Moore, N Collins, S Lockard and G Grogan

82. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Richard Burton be elected as Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

83. Election of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Lisa Lewis be elected as Vice Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

84. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Geary, Mark Saxby, Peter Martin and Adaya Brandon.

85. Substitute Members

Councillor Hilliard was substitute for Councillor Geary.

86. Declarations of Interests

None received.

87. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 30 June 2020, having been previously circulated, be signed by the Chairman and confirmed as a correct record.

88. Action Sheet

The action sheet was noted.

89. Public Issues

The following public question was received and a response as detailed was provided.

Public Question received from Melissa Byers – BCP resident

The Banded funding system was introduced, 2019, for children receiving the High Needs Budget. Figures from an FOI to BCP, confirm an average funding reduction of 44% and evidenced there has been no subsequent Scrutiny Committee review to assess the impact upon children and schools. There is no system of recording statistically how many recipients of Banded funding appeal for more funding. Can the Scrutiny committee comment why this has not been reviewed? Further cuts open the potential for a Judicial Review should the system not have proper scrutiny and accountable systems in place.

Response from the Committee

Thank you for your question to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighting your concern at the average funding reduction from the High Needs Budget. The banding of funding for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) was developed from a proposal by a working group of the Schools Forum. The Forum is an independent group of education representatives. LA officers and Cabinet portfolio holders for Children's and Resources also attend but they are not members. The Forum oversees the use of the Dedicated School's Grant (DSG) which includes funding for schools, early years providers and SEND including EHCPs. Banding was introduced to allow greater flexibility in how schools managed resource in meeting the needs of children with an EHCP. It is acknowledged that this did result in an overall saving to the DSG, which was, and remains, overspent. This was understood when the Schools Forum proposed this change.

Although the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee have not considered this issue specifically it should be noted that the DSG was signed off as part of the Council budget setting process which was of course subject to scrutiny. The Committee have been made aware of the pressures on the DSG and have discussed how these might be addressed. This issue forms part of a much wider ranging recovery plan which has been in place for some years. I have been advised by Officers that it would be appropriate to come back with an update on the broader recovery plan to a future meeting. Consideration is being given to the Committee's work programme next week for the remainder of the municipal year and we will take this into consideration. In accordance with the Council's Constitution

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the Overview and Scrutiny function welcomes suggestions from members of the public for topics of consideration.

90. Children's Services harmonisation - restructure update

The Service Director, Inclusion and Family Services presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The report set out progress in the harmonisation of early help services by the new BCP Council. The paper aimed to update the Committee on the creation of the BCP Early Help Services.

The design would operationalise the BCP Family Support and Early Help Strategic Framework and help deliver on the Corporate Plan's vision to create Brighter Futures. It was noted that the creation of a harmonised structural design had been subject to some delay due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Committee discussed the Report and comments were made, including:

- In response to a request, the Committee was advised that the Young People's Strategic Framework 2020-2023 would be circulated to Members
- In response to a concern regarding the brevity of the Report, the Committee was reassured that this report built on previous reports which had been considered by the Committee and it was proposed that an update report could be provided on the Early Help Strategic Framework in the Autumn
- There were discussions surrounding the use of voluntary partners and individuals and how the current pandemic had strengthened individuals' desires to help within their communities. It was highlighted that Children's Services planned to optimise this opportunity for enabling local communities to help themselves in any ways deemed suitable and appropriate to include possibly providing and supporting a wider youth offer
- In response to a query from the Chairman about the short timescale for completing the process, the Committee was advised that although ambitious, it was believed it could be achieved and was set that way to conclude the process as quickly as possible in the interests of those being affected.
- The Chairman summarised the discussions as follows, the Committee:
 - Acknowledged that the restructuring was causing stress to the individuals involved and appreciated the ambitious timescale for conclusion of the process
 - Looked forward to receiving the key documents referred to
 - Was excited about the prospects of engaging more with the voluntary sector and the community.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the report and progress to date.

91. Youth Parliament Member report

The Youth Participation Worker and Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs) presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The purpose of the report was to update the Committee on the roles of the MYPs and to consider items being championed by the newly elected MYPs. These were detailed by the MYPs as young people and Covid, the environment, knife crime, mental health and Person Health, Social and Economic Education (PHSE).

The MYPs also highlighted work they had been undertaking during lockdown which included a newsletter, videos about what they had been doing during lockdown and setting up an Instagram account.

The Committee discussed the Report and comments were made, including:

- A Member praised the amazing work that had been undertaken, including the newsletter which must have been greatly received.
- In response to a query what 'C Cards' were, the Committee was advised it referred to 'Condom cards' and their purpose was detailed which would make it easier for young people to access them.
- In response to a query on how the areas on focus were decided on, the Committee was advised of the process whereby young people picked their most important issues, each candidate would then campaign on three of the topics and then once elected would finalise their chosen campaigns.
- The Portfolio Holder thanked the MYPs for all their work and advised she felt it would be beneficial to provide them with a budget to help them promote their campaigns
- In response to a query about how many MYPs the BCP Council were allocated, the Committee was advised that the number of MYPs was worked out by the population of 11-18 year olds across the conurbation.
- The Chairman congratulated them on their newsletters and videos and requested that future ones be circulated to the Committee for their information.
- A Committee Member requested that the Committee should promote the MYPs Instagram account.

It was Proposed and Seconded that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee request that the MYPs be provided a budget to assist them with their work and campaigns.

The Chairman summarised the discussions as follows, the Committee:

- Was very impressed with the work undertaken so far
- Now knew what C Cards were

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- Requested a budget be provided to the MYPs to assist with their campaigns and agreement that they should be co-opted as Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED THAT Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- **approve the Youth Parliament Member's position as Co-opted Members on the Committee and welcome close work with them, their Deputies and the Chairman and Vice Chairman to help shape the Committee's Forward Plan.**
- **Request consideration be given to providing the MYPs with a budget to assist them with their campaigns.**

92. The BCP Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People Improvement Journey

The Service Director, Children and Young People's Social Care, presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

In November 2019, Ofsted undertook a focussed visit in respect of planning for permanence for children in BCP.

The outcome of this inspection highlighted a number of areas of improvement which were summarised in the Children's Services Learning and Improvement Plan.

The improvement plan was updated in light of the inspection outcomes and progress was overseen through the BCP Quality Performance Improvement Board.

The Corporate Parenting Board was the governance board which oversees the BCP Corporate Parenting Strategy. The report offered an update in relation to the progress being made for children and actions in place to improve the service delivery to children in BCP.

The Committee discussed the Report and comments were made, including:

- In response to clarification regarding definitions, the Committee was advised that permanence planning was where a long term plan was in place and parallel planning was thinking about a contingency plan
- A Member acknowledged the work that had been undertaken to improve permanence planning and the situation for children in care (CIC) and felt it would be beneficial for the Committee to receive some training on the processes used
- In response to a query regarding mental health, the Committee was advised that a strength and difficulties questionnaire was completed during initial health assessments and if it scored at a certain level it would trigger intervention. It was highlighted that there had been an impact on children and young people's mental health during this pandemic, and this was being closely monitored

- There was some discussion around concerns regarding the lack of breadth of offer available for Post 16 pupils across BCP and in response, the Service Directors detailed their ongoing work within this area which included recently reviewing all the Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for CIC, proactive engagement through the virtual school and ongoing work to help increase the breadth of offer available, particularly vocational courses which it was highlighted was one of the Learning Partnership Board's key priority
- There was some discussion around apprenticeship schemes and the Committee was advised that work was ongoing with the young people within our care to try and identify and match them with work experience, apprenticeships and training. It was also noted that the School Improvement Team did a lot of work around bridging education and employment opportunities.
- In response to a concern regarding timeliness of the initial assessment data detailed in the supplementary information, the Committee was advised that it was acknowledged that the percentages detailed were not acceptable and that a lot of work was being undertaken to address this including simplifying the process and measures being put in place to ensure a faster pace in relation to referrals. The Committee was reassured that the figure was now approximately 60% of assessments completed within the timescale set and there was confidence that the target of 90% would be reached
- In response to a query regarding any protected characteristics of the small proportion of complex young people the Service was dealing with, the Committee was advised that these young people were at risk of exploitation, criminal activity and had varying levels of mental health, unfortunately they had been moving around the system for a long time and although only a small group, were significant. The Committee was reassured they were being closely monitored and consideration was being given regarding wrap around care and to find them stable long term placements. In response to a request from the Chairman, the Committee was advised that a report regarding the profile of the group could be shared with the Committee at a future meeting
- In response to a concern regarding the CIC that were not currently in full time education, the impact on their futures because of it and how their Pupil premium was being spent, the Committee was advised that work was being undertaken through the Early Help Strategy which included four key programs, one of which was importantly linked to speech and language development within the home and school environment. The Committee was advised that the Pupil Premium was held within the virtual school and was carefully monitored and used for the individual child. The Committee was advised of the plans in place to try and address these issues and that moving forward, a policy shift to focus on prevention and an ambition to rapidly reduce those figures within the next academic year. The Member requested a review of this issue come back to Committee to enable it to monitor progress.

- There was discussion around how some children and young people who really struggled with a school environment had thrived during lockdown whilst having to work with schools virtually. Whilst it was widely acknowledged that a school environment was most beneficial, consideration was being given to providing those who were not in school with an online offer

The Chairman summarised the discussions the Committee had as follows:

- Training, employment and those currently not in education
- Mental health impacts
- Work experience and apprenticeships
- Health assessments
- Pupil premium and assurances of where the funds were being spent.

RESOLVED THAT the Committee take note of the progress being made in relation to services for Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People.

93. Significant Changes to Maintained Schools for September 2020 and 2021

The Service Director, Community Learning and Commissioning presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The number of children and young people assessed as requiring a place at a specialist education provision in the BCP area had increased in recent years. Local provision to meet these needs was of high quality, but capacity had not been expanded sufficiently to meet this additional demand. As a result, increased use had to be made of local Independent and Non-Maintained special schools which were comparatively expensive and often located outside of the BCP area. The result of this had been significant pressure on the school Transport budgets. In partnership with the BCP community of schools, a range of proposals had been developed to increase capacity and create new provision to meet the needs of these pupils and these were reported to Cabinet in the paper 'Capital Investment to Increase Special Educational Needs Capacity' on 22 April 2020.

Processes for changes to maintained schools were prescribed by the Department for Education. This report provided details of such changes for three maintained community schools. The request to implement these changes was being made with the support of all three schools involved with the changes.

The Committee discussed the Report and comments were made, including:

- In response to a query regarding how the changes were being funded, the Committee was advised that the additional costs of places would be met through the Dedicated Schools Grant
- The Committee was advised that the increase in places was for current known numbers, particularly in the secondary school

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provision, but that it was a multi year programme with more options and places required in the future.

The Chairman summarised that the Committee was in favour of report and that the financial implications and numbers of children currently known were discussed.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approve:

- (a) The changes proposed for the following schools are agreed**
 - i. Winchelsea Special School**
 - ii. Linwood Special School**
 - iii. Somerford Primary School**
- (b) In the case of Somerford Primary School that approval be given to apply to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator to vary the admission arrangements from September 2021**

94. Dates of Future Meetings

The dates of the future meetings were noted.

95. Forward Plan

The Committee was advised that some work was going to be done on the Forward Plan to incorporate items from the work programming session.

A Committee Member requested an update on the Looked After Children and Child Exploitation item to include County Lines.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

CHAIRMAN