

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on 07 June 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr R Burton – Chair

Cllr L Lewis – Vice-Chair

Present: Cllr E Coope, Cllr S Gabriel, Cllr M Haines, Cllr J Kelly, Cllr S Moore, Cllr L Northover, Cllr R Rocca, Cllr J Edwards, Cllr S McCormack and Cllr D Kelsey

Co-optees: P Martin (Parent Governor) Mr S Welch (Academy Parent Governor), M Saxby (Diocesan Representative) H Maftah and Z Sasic (Members of Youth Parliament)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Geary, Kelly and Phillips.

Councillor Sarah Anderson was in attendance for the Home to School transport item.

2. Substitute Members

Councillor McCormick substituted for Councillor Geary, Councillor Edwards substituted for Councillor Kelly and Councillor Kelsey substituted for Councillor Phillips.

3. Election of Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED that Councillor Burton be elected as Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing 2022/23 Municipal Year.

4. Election of Vice Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED that Councillor Gabriel be elected as Vice Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing 2022/23 Municipal Year.

5. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest received on this occasion.

6. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 May 2022, having previously been circulated, be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

7. Action Sheet

The Chair highlighted that some of the actions had been completed.

8. Public Issues

There were no public issues received on this occasion.

9. Youth Justice Service - Annual Youth Justice Plan

The **Service Manager**, Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service 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 purpose of the report was to present the Youth Justice Plan for 2022/23. There was a statutory requirement to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which must provide specified information about the local provision of youth justice services. The report summarised the Youth Justice Plan for 2022/23, with a copy of the Plan appended. The Youth Justice Plan needed to be approved by the full Council.

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

- In response to a query regarding recording gender identity, the Committee was advised that nationally there was still a position to identify as male or female based on birth sex, but the desired position would be to have two markers, where a selected gender could be recorded in addition to birth sex.
- A Committee Member stated that the report was very readable and understandable and enquired about accounting rules for reoffending rate and if changed regularly how was it possible to have comparison data sets, in response the Committee was advised of nine new indicators which were currently being consulted upon and would be used for youth justice nationally.
- A Committee Member highlighted the diagram on page 30 of the plan which detailed all the multi-agency services which could be involved with a young offender and in response to a concern about too many contacts dealing with them, the Committee was reassured that the relationship with the youth justice worker was central to the Youth Justice Service's work and whilst it may be needed to bring in some additional workers as highlighted on the diagram, it was done cautiously, with the case manager being the main contact with the young offender

- In response to a query regarding the Annual Youth Justice Grant and the reduction shown, the Committee was advised that the level of reduction had been absorbed, helped by merging the Youth Justice Service across the two local authorities and provided resilience to streamline and manage the budget successfully
- It was acknowledged there was currently pressure in the assessments capacity of the speech and language therapists which was resulting in prioritisation of those most in need
- In response to a query regarding the percentage of youth offenders who had past trauma or childhood experiences, the Committee was advised most under the age of 13 who were entering the had experienced some form of childhood trauma, such as being a witness of domestic violence
- In response to a query regarding the first-time entrant's reduction for BCP and a bigger reduction for Dorset, the Committee was advised that whilst the demographics across the two authorities were similar, there was differences between living in a rural area and a urban setting. It was also highlighted that whilst Dorset where further ahead in its development of a strategic approach to early intervention. It was noted that this area needed to be strengthened across BCP
- A Member of the Youth Parliament highlighted the link between early childhood trauma and links to crime and was pleased that this was being highlighted, she advised that there were systems in place in schools to help those children, raising awareness and working together to ensure they don't resort to crime.
- The Service Manager summarised the work which was ongoing in relation to previous childhood trauma to ensure the children got the support they needed.
- In response to a query regarding fixed term and permanent exclusions, the Committee was informed of the work undertaken by fair access panels and how more work was being focused on a coordinated response to make positive recommendations for the child
- In response to a query about what early intervention looked like, the Committee was advised of the importance of a strategic response, to ensure the right support was provided, at the right time in the child's life to ensure they have a better future
- In response to a query regarding exclusions, the issues were highlighted and the importance of building an inclusive environment to ensure children receive an education was important. It was noted that Officers were setting up a pre-exclusion panel which schools would refer pupils to before an exclusion took place to try and consider different options and reduce exclusions.

The Chair summarised the discussions as follows:

- Gender identity reporting
- Moving target due to data recording changes

- Relationships between offender, case manager and multi-agency response
- Annual youth justice grant, merger helped managed cost
- Speech and language
- First time offenders, importance of early intervention
- Childhood trauma
- Permanent exclusions

RESOLVED that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse the Youth Justice Plan so that Cabinet can recommend its approval to the Full Council.

Voting: For – unanimous

10. Child exploitation to include information on County Lines and Knife Crime

The **Service Manager**, Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service and the Director of Corporate parenting and Permanence 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 report provided an update on the actions and progress in identifying and supporting children and young people who were victims of child exploitation and the increased focus that had been placed on those who may be vulnerable to exploitation, based on well-known indicators.

The report also highlighted the collaborative and close partnership work with the police and other agencies to intervene and disrupt the activities of those who target the most vulnerable children and young people.

The Service Manager, referred to the report and wanted to make a correction regarding the Governments drug strategy 'From Harm to Hope', highlighted at Paragraph three, it was clarified that where it stated BCP ranked within the top ten nationally, in terms of youth drug use and complex needs, the paper actually referred to specifically Bournemouth and crack and opiate adult use, however it was acknowledged that this did have an impact on the supply and demand within the area, which in turn had a knock on effect for opportunities for young people.

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

- The Committee Member that requested the item expressed concern that there had not been much progress within the last three years with regards to county lines, sexual exploitation and knife crime. It was suggested that multi agency group would be beneficial to try and progress this and work on a strategy to improve the situation
- The Service Manager acknowledged that there had not been much progress and that the Community Safety Partnership would lead in this area so suggested scrutiny of its work would be a starting point for the Committee

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- There was consensus from the Committee that this area needed to have further scrutiny and there were discussions about the way this could be progressed and who should be involved, and the Chair advised he would take this away for further consideration
- The MYP advised the Committee that part of their role was to find out about issues like this and highlighted the findings which they had discovered which included the differing levels of awareness from pupils from different schools which was shown by the amount of information was being provided by schools
- The Portfolio Holder for Council Priorities and Delivery highlighted that under the new Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, the Community Safety Partnership would sit under the new Corporate and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee but acknowledged that this Committee was solely interested in the impact these issues had on the children and young people of BCP. The Chair advised he would discuss this with the Chair of the Corporate and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
ACTION.
- The Service Director for Children and Young People referred the Committee to paragraph 20 where it highlighted the proposed plan for the expansion of the safeguarding team in BCP to ensure wider multi agency working and be positive for better collaborative working.
- In response to a query regarding the Safeguarding team relocating to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, it was confirmed that where they will be based had not been decided yet and it was acknowledged that there would be issues surrounding security of them being located in the MASH, however the Committee was reassured that their location would not hinder the multi agency working.

It was Proposed and Seconded and agreed by the Committee that in depth scrutiny in this area was required. The details of the method to be determined with an update to be brought to the November Committee.
ACTION

The Chair summarised discussions as follows:

- What had happened and how work was moving forward, the Committee expressed disappointment in the lack of movement
- Agreed to do a deep dive into the issue – send out and invite everyone, feedback outcome in November Committee
- Brief discussion on location of Safeguarding team.

RESOLVED that the in-depth scrutiny in this area be arranged with an update to be brought to the November Committee.

Voting – For – unanimous

11. Home to School Transport

The Team Manager, School Admissions 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.

BCP Council was legally required to have a single home to school transport policy. A BCP Council Policy had been drafted to replace the three existing policies. The draft policy had been developed to ensure consistency across the conurbation. It would provide a single point of reference for families and officers regarding eligibility and how it was assessed.

Permission to determine the policy was being sought from cabinet following a public consultation held January-February 2022. The consultation was held in accordance with the requirements of the Department for Education's statutory guidance. Key stakeholders were targeted during the consultation period.

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

- In response to a query regarding the low level of responses which appeared to be very personal to their own circumstances, the Committee was advised that they had tried to change the layout of the policy to make it clear what it meant to the individuals. The method of engaging with consultees was highlighted and the communications report surrounding the consultation, but unfortunately those had not resulted in people taking the time to engage.
- A Committee Member referred to the section in the policy of what wasn't covered including if a child became unwell during the school day, transport would not be paid for, the Committee was reassured that discussions with the school would be had in order to safeguard the child and would do utmost to help whilst acknowledging limitations
- A Committee Member commented regarding the exceptions and exceptional circumstances that cause parents concern and was therefore pleased there was still an appeals process in place involving elected members. The Committee was advised of the process which would be undertaken before an appeal was necessary to ensure officers took time collectively to ensure appropriate consideration to any requests from parents was given.
- In response to a query regarding free transport for a grammar school, it was advised that this would not be covered unless it was one of the three closest schools to the child's home.
- In response to a query regarding fuel wear and tear and sustainable options, there was discussion regarding active travel such as bikes and it was noted that there were separate webpages in response to the active travel strategy, however purchasing bikes for pupils was not something which would be covered by this strategy

- It was noted that petrol wear and tear was one of the last options considered under the strategy and made up a small percentage of those currently using the home to school transport scheme.

RESOLVED that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend

- (a) Cabinet agrees to determine the Home to School Transport policy, and**
- (b) Delegates authority to the Director of Education, Children's Services to implement the policy for eligibility requests from 2022/23 academic year.**

Voting: For - unanimous

Due to the Officer not yet being in attendance for the item 'Children's Services Improvement Plan – Quality Assurance Framework', the Chair advised the Committee it would move to the next item on the agenda.

12. SEND Improvement Plan

The Director of Education and Skills presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'E' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Following submission of BCP Council and Dorset's Clinical Commissioning Group's Written Statement of Action (WsoA), monitoring visits would be held every three months. The Department for Education (DfE) would use these meetings to scrutinise progress towards the delivery of the WsoA. This paper summarised the information given to the DfE during the first monitoring meeting. Feedback from DfE was due imminently.

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

- A Committee Member highlighted that it was the SEND Improvement Board scrutinising and providing challenge and that there was a large amount of work ongoing, it was noted that the Board did look at some of the concerns raised and hopefully would be in a position to update after the school holidays
- In response to a query regarding recruitment, the Committee was provided with a positive update on the current position with seven new case officers recruited, two new posts were being recruited to and shortlisting was underway for the Head of SEND
- In response to a query about recruiting more education psychologists, the Committee was advised that contact had been made with Southampton University to encourage its graduates to join BCP, it was noted that there was currently only one vacancy in this area but more educational psychologists were required to meet the demands of the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- In response to a query from the Chair about what the Director was most concerned about, the Committee was advised that the main

challenge was the increased request for EHCPs assessments which was up by 59%, the reasons why the increase had happened were highlighted, including an increase around complex mental health needs and the capacity the service would need to manage the increase in demand over the next three to five years

The Chair requested the Committees thanks be passed to the outgoing Head of SEND. **ACTION**

The Chair summarised discussions as follows:

- Recruitment success
- Increase in EHCPs

RESOLVED that the Committee note the progress towards the delivery of the WSoA.

13. Children's Services Improvement Plan – Quality Assurance Framework

The Head of Quality Assurance, Safeguarding and Partnerships 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.

There was evidence of some progress in relation to Quality Assurance because of the leadership 'buy in' and change to the Quality Assurance Framework, which was now more meaningful, engaging and impactful. Compliance and quality had begun to increase and there was now accountability of actions and a clear learning loop.

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

- In response to a query regarding the changes to Practice Learning Reviews (PLRs), the Committee was given a detailed response of the improvements that had been made which included a reduction from two to one PLRs a month had been implemented to improve the quality of the work undertaken. It was noted this resulted in approximately 10% of work being quality assured, it was also highlighted that the PLRs were collaborative with the managers working alongside the case workers.
- The Committee was also advised that a Practice learning reviewer/auditor had been allocated to each team to support managers to get more confident at auditing works
- It was highlighted that 20% of LPRs work would be moderated to ensure audits were accurate, showing more consistency and alignment and that each on had actions which were tracked.
- In response to a concern about consistency of social workers interacting with children and families, the Committee was advised that stability in this area should be addressed through the recruitment and retention strategy which was being progressed
- In response to a query from the Chair about the Josh MacAlister Independent Review of Children's Social Care particularly in relation

to unlocking the potential of family support, the Committee was advised it also highlighted that significant financial support was necessary and it was highlighted that the national safeguarding report would also be considered when looking at the direction of changes and whether any would need to be developed in BCP Children's Services

- In response to a query from the Chair about what the Corporate Director was concerned about, the Committee was advised of the need for financial support to back any progress, whether Children in Need could be placed within the early support service and the Committee was reassured that all of these issues would be considered by the Government in conjunction with the ADCS which was the national body of Directors of Children's Services.

The Chair summarised the discussions as follows:

- PLRs and changes to and improvements
- Possible changes due to McAlister report
- Direction of travel

RESOLVED that the content of the report be accepted as a summary of the progress in relation to Quality Assurance.

14. Covid update – lasting impact to include academic progress and mental health

The Service Manager Schools & Provider Standards 0-19 from the Education and Skills Directorate presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'F' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The report summarised the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic two years after its first effects on BCP schools and examines the possible legacy in terms of:

- Attendance
- Pupil and staff mental health and well-being
- Academic progress and any learning deficits likely to continue.

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

- In response to a query about the differing impacts Covid could have had on young people, and could anything be done to track those most impacted, the Committee was advised that a lot of work had been done in this area and the suffering to children was what teachers and staff most cared about, close attention had been paid to Children in Need, Children in Care, those with EHCPs, virtual school attendees and those who had been attending schools. Schools had been provided with reports to show Ofsted what they had managed to do however it was noted that assessment and

testing had continued as normal this year with no consideration given to the impacts highlighted above

- The impact of long covid on pupils was also highlighted as having a negative impact on a child's education as they needed time to rest.
- The Committee was advised that communication with the Department for Education about what had been done and advised that education boards had done equality impact assessments but aside from placing exams further apart, not much further work had been done in this area
- In response to a query from a Member of Youth Parliament regarding mental health issues and anxiety, the Committee was advised that most schools had a mentoring programme in place to support those children and it was acknowledged that it varied greatly on the impact Covid had had and therefore the support required to the pupils and their families. It was noted that this support was being provided to children who sought it and by schools reaching out to children they felt were in need
- The Committee was advised about the work done by the Children and Young People's partnership board which focused on supporting pupils next steps in education and events to help improve self confidence in face to face interactions
- The Committee was advised by an MYP of feedback from a forum about the differing support provided by schools and the possible link to pupil grades, the Committee was advised that over the last two years grades had not been an issue in schools and the unfairness in the system was highlighted and schools looked hard at what pupils were missing and were focused on education, mental health and wellbeing of pupils and staff.
- In response to a concern about schools prioritising attendance and the issues that presented including achievable grades, university applications and job prospects, the Committee was advised that there was not a simple answer to this but that if someone came back to education too soon, it would have the opposite effect in the long run and this advice was being shared with the children, families and schools
- In response to a concern about many teachers wishing to leave their profession due to the stress, the Committee was advised that there was already a recruitment crisis before Covid and that there was a labour shortage nationally in many professions. It was noted that schools and their staff across BCP had received support from the community, BCP Council and its teams. It was noted that working with mostly unvaccinated pupils increased their vulnerability which added pressure. The Committee was advised of the work that was being done to recruit and support teachers across the conurbation.

The Chair summarised the discussions as follows:

- A very complicated issue with many factors
- Long covid
- Mental health

- Pressures on school and staff and support provided

RECOMMENDED that the Committee note the content of the report into the impact of the Covid pandemic on education in BCP and review, support and agree the draft Long Covid Recovery Attendance Policy which will then be shared as guidance and support for BCP schools.

Voting: For - unanimous

15. Portfolio Holder Update

The Portfolio Holder for Council Priorities and Delivery thanked the Committee for the scrutiny undertaken during the meeting and wanted to highlight one of the issues at the heart of schools funding was the pressure in the high need block and the work which had been undertaken through to appreciative enquiry and written statement of action to address this. It was noted that it was a pilot scheme running in schools with feedback due over the summer to be considered by this Committee during the Autumn.

16. Forward Plan

The Committee noted the Forward Plan and the Chair highlighted that consideration would need to be given of the reduction from six to five Committees throughout the Municipal year.

17. Dates of Future Meetings

It was agreed that the next date for the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be 26 July 2022.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

CHAIR