

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on 06 June 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr B Dove – Chair

Cllr S Bull – Vice-Chair

Present: Cllr B Chick, Cllr P Cooper, Cllr E Harman, Cllr M Howell,
Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr D Martin, Cllr A-M Moriarty, Cllr R Maidment and
Cllr L Williams

Co-Opted Members: H Maftah, MYP

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Brown, Broadhead and Co-optee Peter Martin.

2. Substitute Members

Councillor Williams substituted for Councillor Broadhead and Councillor Maidment substituted for Councillor Brown.

3. Election of Chair

The Vice Chair of the Council presided over the election of Chair for the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Bobbie Dove was proposed and seconded for Chair and there were no other nominations.

RESOLVED that Councillor Bobbie Dove be elected as Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2023/24 municipal year.

4. Election of Vice Chair

The newly elected Chair of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee presided over the election of Vice-Chair. Councillor Simon Bull was proposed and seconded for Vice-Chair and there were no other nominations.

RESOLVED that Councillor Simon Bull be elected as Vice-Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2023/24 municipal year.

5. Declarations of Interests

Councillors Dove and Bull both declared a personal interest due to having family members being in receipt of an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) with BCP Council. Councillor Williams declared a personal interest during the meeting as a Governor at Kings Park Academy and the SEND lead. Councillor Moriarty declared a personal interest during the meeting as she sometimes worked with children who had EHCPs or SEND needs.

6. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 March 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

7. Action Sheet

The action sheet was noted by the Committee.

8. Public Issues

There were no public issues received on this occasion.

The Chair advised of a slight amendment to the Agenda order with the introduction to Children's Services being considered next.

9. Introduction to Children's Services

The Corporate Director of Children's Services provided a presentation to the Committee which detailed the following:

- What is Children's Services – children's social care and education and skills
- Who can support you – Children's Services senior leadership team structure and the services they manage
- Children's Services spend – net budget of £86.1 million
- Vision for our children and young people including brighter futures and children services vision
- Key priorities for BCP Children's Services – including opportunities and challenges
- How Overview and Scrutiny can support Children's Services.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director of Children's Services for the presentation and requested the Committee's thanks be passed to all the staff within the service for their work and advised the Committee would support them in any way they could.

10. Youth Justice Service Youth Justice Plan for 2023/24

Councillor Howell arrived at the start of this Agenda item (6.20pm).

The 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 item was to present the Youth Justice Plan for 2023/24. 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 2023/24, 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 areas which were covered included:

- Effective interventions and the approaches to it from the Youth Justice Service in partnership with the Police.
- Locality delivery and how resources could be targeted including proven youth work schemes and a link to a reduction in anti-social behaviour. It was noted that some of this work would sit with the Community Safety Partnership.
- The work being undertaken by the Early Help Service to strategically pull together available resources to ensure it served all children and young people across BCP.
- More information was given regarding the Turnaround scheme, including it was a national scheme which funded assessments and interventions for children on the cusp of entering the justice system and how it was being used locally including which intervention activities were being used. Its limitations were also highlighted and how the Dorset Combined Service was overcoming this to ensure all children were treated equally.
- The vision of the strategy, priorities highlighted, and terminology were discussed including its creation, why the priorities were chosen and clarification over why some terminology was used.
- Further details regarding the speech and language therapists, including how the success was currently being measured by feedback from families and children. It was noted that more work was needed to consider how the impact could be measured to ensure positive outcomes for children.
- In response to a query about how the Youth Justice Service was holding its partners to account to ensure they were all playing their part in supporting the work of the speech and language therapists, including ensuring the resources were available, the Committee was advised of the discussions around developing pilot programmes with partners together with the work being undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) taking the lead on serious violence duty which was going to consider speech and language therapists input into schools for children at risk of exclusion.
- How the performance monitoring was undertaken was detailed and it was noted that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were changing this year, which over time was hoped would provide better

understanding of the effectiveness of the partnership in addition to this there was quarterly Youth Justice Board assurance process monitoring.

- The Chair advised she would email some queries regarding some language within the plan. **ACTION.**
- The potential risks detailed were discussed and it was noted that the need to recruit to the speech and language post to realise the aspiration that all children were assessed that the youth justice service worked with.
- The Committee was advised that there was an action plan which sat behind the plan and was monitored by the Youth Justice Service Partnership Board which was made up of a multi-agency team and some of the work undertaken by the Board was detailed.
- How support was provided to children, if a need had been identified, was detailed including individual assessment and intervention work and how it was shared with the families and appropriate partners, such as schools.
- The Chair concluded by requesting how the improvements in the intervention work could be measured and it was noted that this could be taken back to the Youth Justice Service Partnership Board for further consideration. **ACTION.**

RECOMMENDED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse the Youth Justice Plan so that Cabinet can recommend its approval to the Full Council.

Voting: For - Unanimous

11. Children's Services Improvement Plan – MV3 Feedback and DfE Advisers Feedback

The Corporate Director of Children's Services 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.

BCP Children's Services was inspected, under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACs) framework in December 2021. The outcome was an overall inadequate judgement.

As a result the Secretary of State of Education issued a Statutory Direction and appointed a DfE Improvement Adviser to support the Council in their improvement of Children's Social Care Services.

The Children's Services Improvement Plan was in place to ensure progress was made at pace in Children's Social Care in line with the recommendations of the December Inspection and in accordance with the statutory direction notice received by the Council in March 2022.

Overview and Scrutiny required regular updates on themes regarding improvement. In March 2023 Children's Services had their third Monitoring Visit, the letter published by Ofsted was presented for scrutiny alongside,

the attached presentation and the DfE Advisers second report. The DfE Adviser in their role was required to review the pace and progress of improvement at regular intervals to ensure it is sufficient and report on this to the Secretary of State

The Committee discussed the report and areas which were covered included:

- In response to a query regarding how children's views were recorded, the Committee was advised of the work done in order to gain, document and reflect on the views of children and young people to ensure consideration was given and a positive impact could be evidenced.
- In response to a query regarding ensuring reviews were completed on time, the Committee was advised of the barriers that were faced and how the service had improved in this area.
- The Virtual School was highlighted, and the Committee was advised of its role, work and the progress that had been made in the task of taking a more strategic view in the attainment and progress of all the children in care.
- Permanence was discussed and the Committee were advised of the definition, the process and the work being undertaken to improve permanency outcomes.
- How the impact of interventions for children were measured including using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), ensuring the voice of the child was key and the various other methods used to measure and assess the impacts to improve outcomes for children and young people within the service.
- Caseloads were discussed including the reasons for differing caseloads per services, the challenges faced and the strategy which had been introduced on how to reduce them across the whole service.
- In response to a query, the Committee were advised of potential identifiable risks which could slow progress, including the national work of Josh McAllister into Children's Services which was leading to some pilot work, a consultation on local authorities management of agency social workers and within BCP risks were identified around recruitment and retention, finances, corporate work and how the service worked with other BCP services efficiently.
- In response to a concern regarding frequent turnover of case workers and the negative impact that would have, the Committee was reassured that this was an important area of focus and was closely monitored and whilst the number was reducing, it was not yet where the service wanted to be.
- The national shortage of social workers was highlighted and how the impact of the inadequate Ofsted and delay in finalising pay and reward for social workers meant BCP was not an attractive proposition for social workers however, it was noted that this was now changing and staff were returning with an increase in permanent staff.

- In response to a query about how the needs of the child or young person were managed in conjunction with all the assessments and reviews required, the Committee was advised of the family first approach and that the child and family have the right to a private life. The different methods of how assessments were undertaken were detailed to demonstrate a varied and individualised approach.

RESOLVED that the Committee scrutinise and note the contents of the report.

12. Update to SEND Mainstream Banding

The Director of Education 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.

The purpose of this paper was to update members on the implementation of the changes of the mainstream SEND banding descriptors and banding values.

This paper reminded Members of the process that was taken to arrive at the options and outlines the implementation process and gives an outline of the spend so far.

The Committee discussed the report and areas which were covered included:

- In response to a query regarding a residents personal case, the Director of Education advised she would discuss this outside of the public Committee.
- In response to a request for feedback from schools, parents and carers about how they have found the banding since the changes had been introduced, the Committee was advised that this could be provided to the Committee once pulled together. **ACTION.**
- With regard to the delivering better value project and the diagnostics undertaken to identify the most impactful changes that could be made to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, the Committee was advised that they identified changes needed including increasing the number of children in mainstream schools, increasing the special provision, clearing the backlog of annual reviews, increasing the implementation of the graduated support and how children were being supported at a low level of SEND.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the update.

13. Brighter Futures Children's Services Key Performance Indicators (Q4)

The Interim Head of Performance 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 report provided a performance update for the period January to March 2023 (Quarter 4 2022-23) for the key performance indicators relating to Children's Services as detailed in the Corporate Performance Scorecard.

The Committee discussed the report and areas which were covered included:

- The 'not in employment, education or training' (NEETs) increase was highlighted and the Committee was advised that there had been an increase in unaccompanied asylum seekers which would impact on the figures, particularly in relation to Years 12 and 13.
- Regarding exclusions, it was clarified that 'as is position' and 'what new will look like' was referred to a review of alternative provision which had been completed which considered what the landscape was now and what it could look like in the future.
- In response to a query regarding the money being spent on alternative provision and whether more funding should be focused on early help, the Committee was advised of the work detailed in the SEND and alternative provision improvement plan which referred to new three strands of alternative provision and the strands and how they would be implemented were detailed. It was noted that this work would be undertaken with primary aged children in addition to secondary school and would work in conjunction with the early help provision.
- In response to a concern regarding the increase of number of pupils excluded, the Committee was advised that it was a whole school issue which was complex as it was the ultimately the decision of the headteacher and governors to exclude. The work BCP was doing in this area was detailed to provide reassurance to the Committee including engaging with schools, providing intervention support, advice from Ofsted that they would not downgrade schools rating if they had pupils who found it difficult to self-regulate and the support provided to schools to keep the young people within the school.
- With reference to the interventions available and timeliness of assessments, the Committee was advised that paediatrics waiting lists were long and that there were delays in EHCP assessments due to a national shortage of Educational Psychologists which impacted on local assessments.
- In response to a query regarding children who were disadvantaged, vulnerable, had additional needs or BAME heritage being disproportionately affected by permanent exclusion, the Committee was advised this work was being considered with all BCP schools as part of the alternative provision review, by increasing the timeliness of the EHCP assessments and ensuring schools had the tools to provide the right support to their pupils at the right time to reduce exclusions.
- The Chair requested all future reports include the EQIAs and RAG ratings. **ACTION.**

RESOLVED that the Performance update be noted.

Councillor Williams left the meeting 8:10pm.

14. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

The Overview and Scrutiny Specialist 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.

Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) was a statutory function of all councils operating an executive model of decision making. In BCP Council, O&S activity was carried out by four O&S committees formed of councillors and co-opted members. There was a requirement to report on the work of O&S to Council, to ensure good visibility of the function and Council ownership of any improvements required.

The annual report contained a summary of O&S activity undertaken over 2019-23, reflections on working practices and an action plan identifying strategic improvements to the O&S function.

All O&S Committees would receive the annual report for consideration, providing opportunity for comment prior to the supply of the final report to Council.

There were no questions from the Committee and the Chair thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Specialist for her report and for the clear steer to ensure the Committee had a positive impact on scrutinising items.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the annual report and associated action plan.

15. Portfolio Holder Update

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Families provided a verbal update which included details about how he was the previous Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and how he wanted the Committee to support his role through their scrutiny and challenge.

The Portfolio Holder advised of his plans for meeting officers, families, attending support groups and training and visiting schools, together with his planned focuses including increasing links with schools to address exclusion issues, support for care experienced young people and strengthen the relationship with schools, recruitment and retention of staff, pay and reward and work conditions, SEND and the transformation and improvement journey and the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder for his four years whilst Chair of the Committee and requested any Committee Members to take up the offer of sitting on the Corporate Parenting Board.

16. Forward Plan

The Overview and Scrutiny Specialist 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 Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee was asked to consider and identify work priorities for its next meeting pending a wider review of its Forward Plan in dedicated workshop.

The Chair advised that there would be some statutory papers which the Committee would need to consider and wanted further consideration given to how the Committee received them.

The Chair requested a work programming session to consider items which the Committee may wish to consider. **ACTION.**

The Overview and Scrutiny Specialist advised of the LGA support which was being offered to the Committee which would be arranged shortly.

An MYP requested that Youth Parliament representative at the work programming session. **ACTION.**

A Committee Member noted the review of Youth Services was on the Forward Plan and wanted further consideration given to this by the Committee. There was some discussion around this provision and the Corporate Director for Children's Services advised that some information could be provided about the ongoing work in this area, including consultation results about what young people wanted as a youth service offer. **ACTION.**

17. Dates of Future Meetings

The dates of the future meetings were noted.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

CHAIR