

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

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

Present:-

Cllr R Burton – Chairman  
Cllr L Lewis – Vice-Chairman

Present: Mr S Welch, Cllr M F Brooke, Cllr E Coope, Cllr N C Geary,  
Cllr P R A Hall, Cllr J Kelly, Cllr L Northover, Cllr S Phillips,  
Cllr M White, Cllr L-J Evans, Hall, Gabriel Baraldi, Meers, Jonty  
Spence and Bradley

Co-opted: Mr M Saxby, Diocesan Representative  
Mr P Martin, Parent Governor Representative  
Mrs E Hall and Mr S Welch, Academy Parent Governor  
Representatives

Also in attendance: Cllr S Moore, Portfolio Holder, Children's Services  
Mr G Baraldi, Miss L Bradley, Miss A Meers and Mr J Spence

46. Apologies

There were no apologies of absence.

47. Substitute Members

None.

48. Declarations of Interests

Councillor Kelly advised that she was a Governor at Tregonwell Academy and Bournemouth Collegiate.

Councillor Hall advised he was a Governor of Twynham School.

Mr Saxby advised he was the Headteacher of St Luke's and now was an Education Consultant who was on the Committee representing the Salisbury Diocese.

Councillor Brooke advised he was now a Member of the Castleman Academy Trust instead of a Governor.

Councillor Moore advised she was now a Member of the Teach Trust.

Mrs Hall advised she was the Chair of Trustees of the Teach Trust.

49. Confirmation of Minutes

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 November 2019, having been previously circulated, be signed by the Chairman and confirmed as a correct record.**

49.1 **Action Sheet**

The action sheet was noted.

50. Public Issues

No public items had been received.

51. Schools Data Outcome Headlines 2018/19 EY-KS5

The Service Director, Quality and Commissioning, 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 provided the provisional outcomes of key stage assessments and the examination headlines for the BCP 2018/19 cohort.

The Committee discussed the Report and comments were made including:

- In response to a concern regarding low results of specific schools, the Committee was advised that this Report detailed the headlines and that the next one would give more details. The Committee was assured that schools were engaging positively and the Learning Partnership Board (LPB) was driving up standards
- The Service Manager for School and Provider Standards and Support expressed caution about naming individual schools until the final data was available which could show a change in the attainment levels reached
- There was some discussion over Academies and the Local Authorities involvement with them. It was highlighted that whilst schools becoming Academies changed the relationship, it did not diminish the Local Authorities responsibilities and commitment to the children
- In response to a query regarding gender appropriate reading, the Corporate Director, Children's Services advised that research suggested that a wide range of reading material for all children proved most beneficial
- The Committee discussed KS 4 and 5 provision, and in particular the following areas:
  - Children in Care (CIC), asylum seekers and their accessibility to take GSCE qualifications.
  - that the KS5 curriculum was currently quite narrow and limited with a decline in design and technology and performing arts subjects

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- The Committee considered different options for a wider breadth of offer across BCP as a whole and were reassured that work was being undertaken with schools to try and address these concerns.
- A Committee Member requested the data relating to teaching English as a foreign language and was advised that this information would be circulated with the minutes
- Gender differences were highlighted with a Member referring to the reference on Page 26 of the Agenda Pack ‘...results being above national for all groups except boys at the end of Year 1’. The Committee was assured that a task group of the LPB was considering this area to try and improve the outcomes of this group of children.
- In response to a query regarding how to encourage more girls into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects, the Committee was advised that this was an area which Children’s Services championed, through working with local employers to raise the profile of STEM careers, a successful careers and enterprise show at the Bournemouth International Centre (BIC), raising the profile of good apprenticeships and a good supportive relationship with Microsoft and other companies to facilitate this
- The Committee was informed of the good practice surrounding early years and it was noted that providing early learning support to parents had a positive impact on pupil’s future attainment. The Committee was advised that work continuing in this area.
- In response to a query whether BCP’s statistical neighbour had been identified, the Committee was advised that Children’s Services were still awaiting this matching, but it was felt that BCP would be able to provide some good learning examples to any matched authority
- In response to a query regarding trends, the Committee was advised that these would be considered in the more detailed Report due in March.

The Chairman summarised that the Committee felt positive about the Report and acknowledged that a large amount of work was being undertaken to help future improvement across all Key Stages. It was noted future scrutiny regarding gender differences may be considered and that a more detailed Report would be provided to the March Committee.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted pending a fuller Report at the Committee’s next meeting.**

52. BCP Children's Services Restructure Update

The Service Director, Children’s Social Care and Youth Offending Services advised the 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, sets out progress made to date on the restructure which was designed to improve the delivery of services to children and families in BCP.

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

- In response to a query regarding why the Children's Social Care Teams had not yet co-located, the Committee was advised it was due to consideration of the possible opportunities the move presented. It was advised that there would be a report to Cabinet in February regarding relocation of services however, the Assessment Team had already moved as it was felt that was time critical.
- In response to a query regarding the use of Agency Social Workers and the higher cost they attract, the Committee was advised that whilst not ideal, strong communication with staff through surveys, team meetings, etc was reducing turnover and contributing towards good retention levels of permanent staff. It was also highlighted that some of the agency Social Worker were keen to become permanent
- The Corporate Director, Children's Services advised the Committee that work was being done to ensure BCP had an attractive offer in place to recruit and retain good quality Social Workers by ensuring the pay was right, caseloads manageable, learning and progression opportunities available and that Newly Qualified (NQ) Social Workers were fully supported
- It was noted that the vacancy rate was currently at 13% and that was lower than national and local comparators
- In response to a query regarding what role Members could play to assist in recruitment, retention and staff moral, the Committee was advised that attending events and promoting and championing a learning and supportive culture as opposed to a blame culture
- In response to a query regarding what impact the transformation had had on front line service, the Committee was advised that more feedback was needed, but some may have experienced a more responsive service, some may still be dissatisfied and some may have not seen any change in the service provided due to the hard work of the front line staff. The aim was a greater level of consistency and feedback regarding this would be sought later in the year and reported to the Committee.

The Chairman summarised that the Committee looked forward to receiving more information regarding the continued colocation plans and details regarding percentages of Agency Social Workers in order to continue monitoring these areas.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, acknowledged the hard work of the Social Workers during this transitional period and recorded its appreciation for all their work.

**RESOLVED that the Committee note the Report.**

53. Children's Services Budget Information 2019/2020

The Chairman advised that this 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, was being considered following a request from a Committee Member.

The Service Director, Quality and Commissioning, advised the Report provided an opportunity for the Committee to consider and comment on the ongoing work to address budget pressures identified in the Children's Services budgets for 2019/20.

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

- In response to a query whether the overspend detailed in the Report at the end of Q2 had been reduced as now close to year end, the Service Director, Quality and Commissioning, confirmed that the overspends would not exceed the levels reported and that work was being undertaken to try and reduce them
- A Member enquired how it was proposed to reduce this deficit, as the Report did not detail options and also how satisfied Children's Services were that value for money was being received in the high cost placements. The Committee was advised that this had been a difficult budget due to the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), with uncertainty regarding levels of cost but that a resilience reserves had been set aside to support this budget. The Committee was also advised that this year's budget being used to plan for future budgets
- The Children in Care costs were considered, and the Committee was advised that Children's Services worked closely with providers but it was a difficult and challenging environment and services that provide for high level complex needs children were very limited and costly
- The Committee was advised that BCP was using best practice methodology from the predecessor Council, Poole, which considered high complex needs and therefore high costs. As a result of this work, Children's Services had been successful in sourcing more local appropriate care provision and therefore the children benefited more intensive support from their Social Worker. This methodology was now being extended to consider SEND children
- Regarding SEN transport costs, the Committee was advised they related to the workforce that support this service and an explanation of how the costs were incurred was given. There was acknowledgment that further work was required to reduce these costs in the future
- The Committee was advised that the priority for 2020/21 was to consider how to create the specialist adolescent support provision that the children who sit behind the figures required. The need to develop flexible, assertive, trauma informed, adolescent services to include multi agency wrap around care was highlighted and the Corporate Director, Children's Services advised a future report could be considered on this.
- In response to how this overspend could be explained to residents, the Committee was advised that a number of unknown children who had high level complex needs were brought into care shortly after BCP's creation and that there would have been no way to have anticipated this within the budget

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- A Member requested information regarding how many children made up the Children in Care from the Christchurch area overspend of £795,000.
- The Portfolio Holder assured the Committee that this overspend would not impact on the residents Council Tax contributions and that the budget would be balanced by using funds from the resilience reserves
- The Corporate Director, Children's Services advised that Members could assist by promoting and helping source foster carers who could accommodate some of the higher needs children within BCP
- In response to a query regarding the mainstream transport, the Committee was advised that the mode of transport reflected the needs of the individual, together with the locations and distances. The Committee was assured that BCP Council had an integrated transport department who commissioned all transport and looked at efficient and cost effective ways of providing a considered and complete transport approach.

The Chairman summarised that the Committee was concerned regarding the overspend, with questions regarding the children in care and why this was not anticipated. The Committee sought reassurance that this level of overspend would not happen again and how it can be mitigated in the future.

**RESOLVED that the Committee note the budget position and the actions being taken to address the identified pressures.**

54. Forward Plan

The Chairman advised that School Performance Monitoring had been added to Forward Plan for the next Committee meeting.

The Corporate Director, Children's Services, requested an amendment to the title of Item number 7 and in relation to item number 9, advised an update regarding new strategy development would be provided. The Committee was reassured that this report would also include the regular data requested.

55. Dates of Future Meetings

The dates of the future meetings were noted. The Committee agreed to continue rotating the meetings across the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Civic offices.

56. Exclusion of Press and Public

**RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 in Part I of**

**Schedule 12A of the Act and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs such interest in disclosing the information.**

57. BCP Family Support Strategy

Exempt Information – Category 4 (Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultation or negotiations, in connections with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under the authority.)

The Chairman opened the item by advising the Committee that he had been part of the Working Party which had considered this Strategy and he wanted to thank the Officers for their work on its development. The Chairman noted that some minor changes requested at the last working party still needed to be updated.

The Portfolio Holder, Children's Services also thanked the working party and Offices for their hard work and advised that the Strategy would be considered by Cabinet in February.

The Service Director for Inclusion and Family Services advised the purpose of the 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 was to gain the Committee's views on the aims, objectives and elements of the strategy which would be presented to Cabinet in February.

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

- A Committee Member gave gratitude for the Strategy and the work that had clearly gone in to its creation. She felt it showed very positive aspirations and intent for wanting to provide the best for the children of BCP.
- In response to a concern regarding the inclusion support for children who were home educated and how these children were monitored, the Committee was assured that whilst not monitored through a school environment, the local authority still had a safeguarding responsibility towards them. The Corporate Director, Children's Services advised she would arrange a briefing regarding the local authorities statutory duties for home educated children.
- A Committee Member welcomed the improved youth offer, both targeted and outreach, and felt this would be very beneficial for the young people within BCP
- In response to a query regarding the 'Targeted Opportunities' and the reference to 'Dads' under the 'Ready Families' section of the Strategy, detailed at Page 71 of the Agenda Pack, the Committee was advised that this section referred to families where additional support was needed and how parents were a key factor in improving children's wellbeing

- A Committee Member requested further work be undertaken regarding referral times for Child and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- It was clarified that the nine family hubs referred to would be spread across the BCP conurbation and already established community settings, such as Children's Centres, would be used for this purpose
- A Committee Member praised the Strategy and expressed the importance of ensuring communication and signposting of the Services was vital to ensure it was a success. The Committee was advised that the approach toward communication was being considered and that it was imperative that the information was disseminated to the wider community through a variety of mediums.

The Chairman summarised the Committee's overall view that the BCP Family Support Strategy was very positive and championed holistic progress, with enthusiasm around the new multi-agency hubs. The Committee expressed concerns regarding the monitoring of home educated children within the area and referrals to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and it was felt that further investigation was needed in these areas.

**RESOLVED that the Committee positively supported the Strategy for recommendation to Cabinet.**

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

CHAIRMAN