

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on 08 June 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

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

Present: Cllr E Coope, Cllr B Dunlop, Cllr J Kelly, Cllr S Moore,  
Cllr L Northover, Cllr Dr F Rice, Mr S Welch, Mr M Saxby,  
Cllr D Borthwick, Cllr P Hilliard and Cllr S Gabriel

Co-Opted Members: P Martin – Parent Governor, M Saxby – Diocesan Representative and  
S Welch – Academy Parent Governor, N Collins – Member of Youth  
Parliament

Also in attendance: Cllr S Bartlett – Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board  
(Agenda item 10 only)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Geary and Rocco.

2. Substitute Members

Councillor Hilliard substituted for Councillor Geary and Councillor Borthwick substituted for Councillor Rocco.

3. Election of Chair

It was Proposed by Councilor Hilliard and Seconded by Councillor Moore and

**RESOLVED that Councillor Burton be elected as Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal year 2021/22.**

4. Election of Vice Chair

It was Proposed by Councillor Moore and Seconded by Councillor Burton and

**RESOLVED that Councillor Lewis be elected as Vice Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal year 2021/22.**

5. Declarations of Interests

None received.

6. Confirmation of Minutes

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 29 March 2021, having previously been circulated, be agreed, and signed by the Chair.**

7. Action Sheet

The action sheet was noted.

8. Public Issues

No public issues were received.

9. Youth Justice Service Youth Justice Plan for 2021/22

The Chair advised that the 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 was not going to be discussed at the Committee. It was noted that it had been circulated prior asking Committee Members if they had any comments and none had been received.

It was noted that there was a statutory requirement to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which provided specified information about the local provision of youth justice services. The report summarised the Youth Justice Plan for 2021/22, with a copy of the Plan appended. The Youth Justice Plan needed to be approved by the full Council.

The Chair advised that the Plan with current data would come back to the Committee in six months' time. **(add to Forward Plan).**

**RESOLVED that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Youth Justice Plan to Cabinet and Council and that a Report come back to Committee in six months.**

10. Expansion of Longspee Special School at the Bournemouth Learning Centre

The Chair introduced the item and welcomed the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board who had been invited to attend for this item. The Education Consultant 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 Committee discussed the Report, and comments were made, including:

- The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board advised of the reason why this Report was coming to Committee and expressed concern that the Cabinet report of 14 April 2021 had not been

appended to the Report, which meant that adequate scrutiny into the substantial increase in project costs could not be undertaken. He stressed that the scrutiny issue was not surrounding the school or quality of work undertaken, which he felt demonstrated impressive work and value for money, but the way the project was launched with the initial budget and the subsequent management of it, including the funding agreement between BCP and the Ambitions Trust.

- The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the concerns regarding the governance of capital projects and apologised that the Cabinet report had not been circulated to the Committee. She also sought to reassure the Committee of the new governance process which would monitor capital projects moving forward
- In response to a query about the funding agreement, the Committee was advised that it had not yet been signed as there were some issues with the lease which meant it could only be signed on completion of the works
- In response to a query regarding renewable energy considerations, the Committee was advised that a previous Report had provided details of these and could be circulated again for information **(Action)**
- The Committee discussed possible ways forward and felt that it would be beneficial to receive an update report at a future date including the difference the project had made for the pupils and fuller details of the overspend.
- Some of the Committee advised that they had had an opportunity to visit the site and were very impressed and the Corporate Director welcomed visits from other Committee Members **(Action)**
- The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board felt it would be beneficial for the Board to have a higher level of input and monitoring of costs on Capital projects and felt that a report on the completion of the project would be beneficial to help learning. He also felt that the Board may wish to scrutinise the Cabinet report from April 2021.

The Chair summarised the discussions as follows:

- The Committee to receive an update report in Autumn following completion of project
- The Overview & Scrutiny Board to consider whether it wants to scrutinise the April Cabinet report at a future date.

**RESOLVED that the Committee note the Report and request an update Report once the project is complete.**

11. Improvement Journey – progress update

The DfE Improvement Advisor for BCP and Interim Corporate Director, Children's Services 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.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
08 June 2021

Members had received an overview report of progress at their last meeting on 29 March 2021 and requested to see the performance information which substantiated the progress being made. Two performance-related documents were attached to the Report, which confirmed the trajectory of improvement which had been maintained since the March Committee.

The Committee discussed the Report and comments were made including:

- A Member praised the improvements detailed, the aspiration of the Service being rated 'good' in 12-18 months and the reduction of poor or inadequate work being undertaken.
- In response to a query about recruitment and retention, the Committee was advised that it was less fragile and positive steps had been taken such as recruiting managers who could manage virtually, initiatives that had increased the recruitment of newly qualified Social Workers and students and that workforce planning progression was still being considered to help improvements in this area.
- There was a detailed discussion about inclusions practices across BCP, and the Committee was advised of the difficulties surrounding the issue and that this was a top priority for the new Director of Education when they took up post.
- The DfE Improvement Advisor advised the Committee that there was a lot of work that needed to be done locally regarding inclusion to develop a strong partnership between all the partners to ensure best possible outcomes for local children. It was advised that once the enquiry was completed, a Report would come to Committee providing an update on the findings, progress, and action plan.
- A Member advised of the possible benefits of a publicised BCP standard of exclusion/inclusion through a formal multi-agency conference.
- In response to a query from the Chair regarding the Mosaic case management system, the Committee was advised that there were still some risks as some of the service areas still used Care Together but that these risks were being mitigated as much as possible and examples of this were given
- In response to a query regarding the service questionnaires, the Committee was advised that this was going to continue as part of the engagement process by trying to measure improvement in staff moral to lead to greater stability, communication, and feedback.

The Chair summarised the discussion as follows:

- To achieve a 'Good' rating would take time
- The positives of a less fragile workforce and better planning
- Inclusion including examples of good practice
- BCP wide definition of exclusion
- Importance of working with external agencies
- Mosaic case management system; and
- Staff questionnaires.

**RESOLVED that the Committee note and scrutinised the performance documents and any points or suggestions provided be built into the next stage of the improvement journey.**

12. Covid Impact to include information on Pupil Premium and child poverty

The Headteacher, Virtual School and College 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 explained Pupil Premium and examples of how schools made use of it. The report outlined how Covid had impacted on the use of Pupil Premium and how schools had adapted their spend accordingly. The report also summarised how the Holidays, Activities and Food (HAF) Programme and Winter Fund Grant supported our vulnerable children and families during the pandemic.

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

- In response to a query, the Committee was advised that once a pupil received Pupil Premium (PP), it stayed with them and although the funding was not ringfenced to a pupil, there was an expectation that the school would publish what it used PP for and Ofsted would want to know of the impact it was having on the pupils entitled to receive it
- There was a discussion around the changes in PP and the impact this could have on the most vulnerable children. The Committee was reassured that there were several other funding streams which were available to schools and this change therefore needed to be seen in the context of the other grants available. The Corporate Director invite the Chair and interested Committee Member to have a fuller discussion surrounding this outside of the Committee. **(Action)**.
- The Committee was advised that Covid had had a huge impact on the needs of families and that schools were aware of this and working to adapt the support they provided working alongside charities and other agencies where appropriate to adapt to the developing needs
- In response to a query regarding the voucher scheme at Asda, the Committee was advised that take up had proved very successful, but it may not be possible to find out if the vouchers were used. **(Action)**

The Chair summarised the discussions as follows:

- Use of PP money in schools
- Change in PP allocation, other funding streams and a meeting to discuss further
- Take up of voucher scheme

**RESOLVED that the Committee note the information contained within the update.**

13. SEND Improvement Journey

The Education Consultant 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.

The attached slide pack provided a summary of the statutory responsibility of the Council, the views of children and young people, areas for improvement and the current position.

The Chair invited a Committee Member who also sat on the SEND Improvement Board to address the Committee. The Committee Member provided some background around the setting up of the Board, the membership and the progress being made. The Committee was advised that it was anticipated that Ofsted would be inspecting the Service shortly and that it was hoped they recognised the work being undertaken and planned.

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

- In response to a query regarding the new SEND assurance framework, the Committee was advised that previously there was not a set standard of Corporate measures. It was noted that this framework was crucial to assist in Quality Assurance.
- The Committee discussed the shortfall in high needs block funding and was advised that there was an issue nationally across all Local Authorities and the Government was aware of the issue. The Committee was advised that the service tried to manage it as efficiently as possible.
- A Committee Member requested more detailed information to enable the Committee to track improvements and enquired about how the SEND Improvement journey was reflected in the Children and Young People's Plan. The Committee was advised there was a SEND dashboard which detailed all the key performance indicators and provided a measure for the service to monitor. The Committee was advised that this could be shared with it at a future date. **(Action)**.
- The Committee decided to add the SEND Improvement Journey to the Forward Plan at regular intervals and the Corporate Director for Children's Services advised that they could provide a verbal update to the next Committee on the upcoming Ofsted visit. **(Add to Forward Plan)**.
- In response to a query regarding suitable housing options, the Committee was advised that the SEND Strategy considered this issue in more detail, considering a range of options for what the young people wanted and needed, including through transition to adulthood.

The Chair summarised the discussion as follows:

- High needs block overspends and shortfall national

- QA and standards – would like sight of them
- Metrics, baselines, KPIs
- QP and reflection in EHCP
- Update in September to include dashboard
- Verbal update on Send Ofsted
- Housing

**RESOLVED that the Committee note the information contained within the update and continue to monitor progress made at future Committee.**

14. Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care (CiC) and Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) 2021 – 2024

The Manager, Access to Resources Team (ART) 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 Sufficiency Strategy sets out how Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole Council (BCP Council) intend to meet its sufficiency duty as laid out in section 22G of the Children Act 1989. This required local authorities to take steps that secure, as far as reasonably practical, sufficient accommodation for children in care within their local authority area.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Strategy would be going to Cabinet only for approval.

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

- In response to a query regarding the seven key priorities, the Committee was advised that each of those priorities was underpinned by others and that they all fed into the action plan.
- In response to a query regarding the need to register provision for Children in Care (CiC), the Committee was advised that Priority five in the strategy dealt with this and BCP had been successful in minimising this type of provision and was working with local providers to ensure their offer was registered and regulated prior to September. It was highlighted that some providers were exploiting this change and had increased charges to address it.
- Suitable local provision was discussed and it was noted that the services edge of care offer supported enabling families to stay together where possible, however if alternative provision was required, sometimes the risk of exploitation meant that the service user had to be relocated out of the local area.
- A Member of the Youth Parliament was pleased that in capturing voices of young people, the voice of the MYPs was being reflected and wished to continue to work with Officers in this area. **(Action)**
- A Member expressed the importance of all the Strategies and Plans being linked to the Children and young People's Plan to ensure there was dynamic engagement between them.

- The service was asked to double check the figures in the strategy, in relation to the percentages of BAME detailed as there was two different figures which did not correlate. **(Action)**.
- When considering how the Committee could scrutinise the strategy moving forward, it was discussed that qualitative responses would be very beneficial to see what difference the strategy was making for the children and young people
- A request for the equality impact assessment to be shared with the Committee once completed was made. **(Action)**.
- The Committee requested an update once a review had been undertaken to Committee in early 2022. **(Add to Forward Plan)**.
- Accommodation was discussed and it was noted that the six studio flats had been a great success, whilst some had been accessed in times of crisis, they had provided a great step in preparing the young people for independence. The Committee noted that the service had a clear housing pathway and transition for when young people were ready
- Foster carers were discussed, together with the issue of available housing. It was noted that the Services partnership with Housing was very strong.

The Chair summarised discussions as follows:

- Unregulated provision, residential and suitable local
- Capturing voice of MYPs
- Dashboards - qualitative
- Data – check BAME
- In line with good and outstanding for 2022
- Foster carers
- Supported flats

**RESOLVED that the Committee endorse the Sufficiency Strategy to Cabinet.**

15. Portfolio Holder Update

Chair introduced the item and welcomed the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Covid Resilience, Schools and Skills and the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People to address the Committee.

The Portfolio Holders both thanked the Committee for its contributions and acknowledged that the service was on a very major improvement journey, thanking the staff for their commitment to the success of that journey.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holders for their comments.

16. Items for Information

The Chair advised that the items for information would be circulated after the Committee.



17. Forward Plan

The Committee noted the Forward Plan and the Chair advised that following the meeting, there were a few additions.

18. Dates of Future Meetings

Noted.

The meeting ended at 9pm.

CHAIRMAN