

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING & CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 12 September 2019 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Friday, 13 December 2019.

**Elected Members:**

- Amanda Boote
- \* Mr Chris Botten (Vice-Chairman)
- Mrs Liz Bowes
- \* Mr Robert Evans
- \* Mrs Kay Hammond (Chairman)
- Mrs Yvonna Lay
- \* Mr Peter Martin
- Mrs Lesley Steeds (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Ms Barbara Thomson
- \* Mr Chris Townsend
- \* Mr Richard Walsh
- \* Mrs Victoria Young

**Co-opted Members:**

- Mr Simon Parr, Diocesan Representative for the Catholic Church
- \* Mrs Tanya Quddus, Parent Governor Representative
- \* Mr Alex Tear, Diocesan Representative for the Anglican Church, Diocese of Guildford

**In attendance**

Mrs Julie Ilies, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning  
Mrs Mary Lewis, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Liz Bowes, Yvonna Lay, Lesley Steeds and Simon Parr. David Mansfield acted as a substitute for Lesley Steeds.

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 26 JUNE 2019 [Item 2]**

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

**3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

None received.

**4 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were no questions or petitions received.

## **5 SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN IN SURREY [Item 5]**

### **Witnesses:**

Mary Lewis, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families

Jacquie Burke, Director for Family Resilience & Safeguarding, Children's Services

Lesley Hunt, Service Manager, Children's Services

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Director provided an update on progress since their last appearance at the Committee. The critical activity was the implementation of the Directorate wide restructure. Levels of need were reviewed leading to the creation of a new social work document (Effective Family Resilience). The service had trained close to 2,000 people across the public sector in Surrey using this document in preparation for the new Single Point of Access (SPA). Ofsted visited and published positive report; the council met all of its commitments. Staffing issues persist but there were plans in place to resolve these.
2. The level 2 early help offer had been recommissioned, the key difference was that the service commissioned on an outcomes basis and had implemented robust contract management.
3. Four permanent Assistant Directors have been recruited to lead the quadrant that social care teams are organised into across the county. They had responsibility for creating effective relationships and would hold regular family resilience network meetings involving statutory partners and providers.
4. The Committee returned to the issue of recruitment and were advised that this was not purely a Surrey problem. The appointment of a new Assistant Director from Hampshire County Council was positive. The Director further explained that council office space was often in the wrong places to visit families from. As a result, north east practitioners have relocated to a building in Walton-on-Thames. There have been improvements to line management, caseload sizes and supervision.
5. The Director thought that there were many former social workers who would be keen to return to the profession so had created a return to social work programme. The service also aimed to persuade agency workers to become permanent staff, implement an overseas recruitment programme and would work with Community Care to promote its successes.
6. Members asked about developing our own workforce. The Director confirmed this was happening with many Family Support Workers retraining to become social workers. Apprenticeships were also being used. The Cabinet Member reminded the Committee of the existence of the council's Children's Workforce Academy.

7. The Director advised that nearly 800 case audits had been done and practice improvements were noticeable. Audits show good direct work, management oversight, preparation for court and in court work. The inadequate cases were tracked to ensure lessons were learned. The Director admitted that plans are not as good as expected though not unsafe. A review of the case management system was underway as another mitigation measure.
8. A Member asked about the usage of services in Surrey Heath and the problems of travelling to different premises. The Service Manager confirmed the service was in the process of moving and provision of universal services had ended in the area. The service were in the process of transforming the Old Dean centre, they will monitor need and referrals and work to ensure community support was delivered via outreach and not in the Old Dean Centre.
9. Local issues in Mole Valley were also raised. The Service Manager had expected these complaints owing to the larger percentage cut to funding in this area. Historically Mole Valley had a significantly larger proportion of funding.
10. Some of the concerns raised came from the new provider, Dorking Nursery School, that felt there had been a disproportionate reduction. The service has a strong rationale for this and need to direct the council's resources to those most in need. The Committee were told that the council would work with Guildford Diocese on the future of Trinity School building.
11. Responding to a question on ensuring consistency and continuity of care in the new service model the witnesses explained that the Assistant Directors have a lead area of responsibility e.g. targeted youth services, safeguarding and assessment. Those staff will drive service plans, performance and quality. The change in model would remove the delays seen in the MASH.
12. The range of providers in the new service would work to a consistent specification for the providers. The service had worked with the original children centres advisors to create this specification. The witnesses were confident that the service could support and challenge providers. The reduction of providers from 55 to 15 meant that a more manageable and consistent service was possible. No redundancies had been made and the service had tried to retain talent as much as possible.
13. The Cabinet Member responded to a question regarding the ceasing of local early help advisory boards. The service was changing at pace which was unusual for the council. We have been told by the Children's Commissioner and Ofsted that too much funding was allocated to buildings and governance and not enough on making people safe.
14. The Committee sought assurance that the expected lowering of activity was based on evidence that demand was reducing and not as a result of people being missed. The Director was

mindful of this but confirmed that numbers coming into the system were being reduced. It was reported that we previously had an open door. Partners sent cases to the council when families' needs did not meet statutory thresholds.

15. There was not enough partnership work being done during the assessment process. Effective Family Resilience document sets out clear levels of need. The biggest reduction was in Police contacts. Partners would now request support rather than make a referral.
16. The Committee noted Ofsted's reference to addressing risk in the referral system. The service was making support available quicker and supporting partners with advice and guidance.
17. The Chairman queried the impact on the service's budget position of the new model. The Director advised that the premise of the Family Resilience model is that children stay with families as long as possible. Recruiting staff to work with parents to help. This change to practice will impact the budget. Furthermore, the Placement Panel looks at the cost and location of placements and was committed to placing more children in county.

**Further information to be provided:**

- The number of audits judged inadequate from the 800 audits to be supplied to the Committee

**Recommendations:**

1. That the Committee's Performance Sub-Group monitors the quality of social work practice, service user experience and the performance of the new Family Resilience model via its regular scrutiny of the Children's Service compendium and feeds back to the Committee as appropriate e.g. future agenda item

**6 LIBRARIES AND CULTURAL SERVICE TRANSFORMATION [Item 6]**

**Witnesses:**

Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning

Liz Mills, Director for Education, Lifelong Learning & Culture

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Cabinet Member explained that the transformation of the library service was not just about the buildings they occupy but digital offerings and outreach services as well.
2. The Vice-Chairman asked how the different needs of rural and urban communities would be considered and urged the witnesses to use the frontline staff in the development of the future services. The Cabinet Member confirmed this issue was part of their conversations with district and borough councils.

3. The Committee raised concerns with the local offer while offering support for the principles behind the transformation programme. Would transformation funds be reinvested in the service? The Cabinet Member emphasised that the service had to be financially viable.
4. This council spent £12 per head in 2017/18 on its library offer, other English counties averaged £9.70. This funding level did not mean the council necessarily provided a better service. There were opportunities for income generation and savings to be made. The Director added that there was a need for capital investment and this would be part of the budget setting for 2020/21.
5. The Committee put it to the witnesses that some libraries will close from the existing 52 and that this would be a challenge. How will the council prepare for that? The Cabinet Member stated that any reports of the number of libraries to close were rumour as the offer was not finalised. Any options that go to the public for consultation will have been sense checked first.
6. The Director added that the service had taken learning from other consultations elsewhere in the country and the level of public interest. They anticipated be an increase in Freedom of Information requests and petitions. Additional support to boost the service's capacity would be needed to have a meaningful consultation.
7. A Member asked what the risks associated with the changes to model were. The Director considered some of these to be access in rural areas, the needs of more vulnerable sections of community for example people with learning disabilities and older people. A council produced needs analysis had allowed the service to think about place carefully and would lead to services in new areas. There would need to be a phased approach to delivery.
8. The Cabinet Member explained that there would be engagement with local and joint committees, Member briefings and that possibilities for the service would be worked out with local Members to ensure the plans were understood. The Cabinet Member felt the earliest this topic could go to Cabinet would be November and expected to return to this Committee too.
9. The Chairman requested that outreach services were more defined when the consultation was launched and that more information was made available on the timescales for transformation to deflect any rumours.

## **7 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 7]**

### **Witnesses:**

Kay Hammond, Chairman  
Chris Botten, Vice-Chairman

### **Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman suggested holding the next meeting in Guildford. This meeting dating presented a clash for Waverley Members who asked whether the meeting could be held in the afternoon.

2. The Vice-Chairman outlined the plans for the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Task Group. This would occur in three sections covering: current provision, support to mainstream schools and service resourcing from October to December.
3. The membership of the Task Group, alongside the Vice-Chairman, was Barbara Thomson and Chris Townsend but the Vice-Chairman welcomed other participants and confirmed that other Members not on the Committee could be co-opted if appropriate.

**8 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 8]**

The Committee noted its next meeting would be held on 13 December 2019.

Meeting ended at: 12:34

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**Chairman**