

MINUTES of the meeting of the **CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING & CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 1.30 pm on 13 December 2019 at Guildford Borough Council, Millmead, Guildford , GU2 4BB.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Tuesday, 21 January 2020.

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:

Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families
Cabinet Member for All Age Learning

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Tanya Quddus.

10 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 12 SEPTEMBER 2019 [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

None received.

12 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

None received.

13 UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS [Item 5]

Witnesses:

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

Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All Age Learning

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families highlighted that progress was continuing at pace in Children's Services. The Member informed the Committee that the Children's Commissioner's report which noted substantial progress had been delayed due to the general election and would be published on Wednesday 18 December 2019. The feedback meeting with the Children's Commissioner was positive and they would be recommending to the Minister that Children's Services would no longer need to be under the auspices of the commissioner.
2. A Member of the Committee asked the Cabinet Member for All Age Learning and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families whether in future budget updates the Cabinet Members could separate their figures into their two respective areas of responsibility, in order to avoid ambiguity. The Cabinet Members agreed that the budget update should be clearer next time.
3. The Cabinet Member was questioned about the commissioning of the new Child and Adolescent Mental Health service (CAMHS) including the response from the market and recruitment to permanent post vacancies. The Cabinet Member advised that there had been positive market engagement so far. The Cabinet Member also stated the importance of dealing with the current waiting list problems and explained that there was ongoing work with the provider, Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SaBP), to improve this and added it was crucial to be honest about poor performance.
4. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families highlighted that there had been a recent increase in the number of children entering the care system and that the service needed to increase its efficiency, albeit there had been an increase in recruitment for foster care placements. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the council's residential homes for children were of very good quality, with Libertas having just been given an outstanding grading by Ofsted and more money from the capital budget enabling greater capacity of these homes in the future. The Cabinet Members stated that there were now permanent directors and service managers in Children's Services but there was still a shortage of social workers both in Surrey and nationally.
5. A Member asked the Cabinet Member for All Age Learning to elaborate on how specialist independent providers might be successfully negotiated with to ensure placements were value for money and improved children's outcomes. The Cabinet Member stated that they had put capital investment into increasing available places in the county for children with special needs and that additional places on supported internships and Life Skill based programmes for those on the Adult Social Care (ASC) pathway were being

commissioned. They asserted that the traditional focus on purely qualification-based, “school” type education did not necessarily give the most appropriate preparation for adulthood for all children. Finally, they informed the Committee that the commissioning team were agreeing the cost of packages to meet Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) stipulations and ensuring that there was clarity on what was included and what fell to other partners, such as health providers, to pay for.

6. A Member welcomed a future Ofsted inspection and asked whether the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families could give a timetable of progress vis-a-vis moving clinical psychologists closer to schools. The Cabinet Member stated that it was likely that between June and September they would receive an ILACS (Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services) inspection. They appreciated that the training for support staff in schools - Targeted Approach to Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) – in the CAMHS contract had not been understood well. In September, therefore, schools were reminded of the training that they could receive for emotional wellbeing support. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that they would be able to discern the percentage increase of uptake of this support, relative to the previous term, soon
7. The Chairman of the Select Committee highlighted that in relation to initial health assessments for looked after children, a third of the deadlines had been missed. They asked the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families how they were working to improve this. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families replied that the Executive Director had been speaking to his NHS equivalent to keep initial health assessments working at a high level of timeliness. When the success rate had reached 90%, this communication stopped and within a month there had been clear deterioration. This was therefore reintroduced and needed to become business as usual. They stated that within the last month there had been a reduction from 58 to 38 children who were not in the right timescale for their assessment. Regardless of this improvement, there remained problematic issue areas such as out-of-county placements, but this was something they would be focusing on in the future.
8. The Chairman also asked whether school governors’ support for looked after children (LAC) was an issue and whether the Committee should be scrutinising this. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families suggested that the committee could scrutinise support for all vulnerable learners, rather than just support for LAC. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families informed the Committee that they would be writing to all of Surrey’s elected councillors in January outlining their responsibilities in working together to safeguard children. Additionally, the Cabinet Member requested that the Committee scrutinise the new Corporate Parenting Strategy at its next meeting and suggested that a Corporate Parenting annual report was scrutinised thereafter.
9. The Cabinet Member for All Age Learning highlighted that, in Surrey, disadvantaged pupils in early years, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and

Key Stage 4 achieved below national results albeit the picture was mixed as to whether the gap had widened or closed since the 2018 data. Notwithstanding they had made improvements both in the Virtual School and with how each child's progression was monitored. SEND was a significant area of overspend and home to school transport both mainstream and to special school places was a key element of that overspend. A board was being established to provide detailed oversight. The Vice Chairman of the Select Committee informed the Cabinet Member that the SEND Task Group would be developing these issues and reporting its findings in the next Committee meeting.

Actions/Further information to be provided:

- i) Clearer presentation of budget figures in future Cabinet Member Update reports.
- ii) Addition of scrutiny item on school governing body support for vulnerable learners including looked after children and children with SEN. This in future can be based on the corporate parenting board annual report.

14 CHILDREN'S SINGLE POINT OF ACCESS [Item 6]

Witnesses:

Mary Lewis, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families
Dr Lisa Bursill, Assistant Director Early Help and Hubs, Family Resilience and Safeguarding
Jackie Burke, Director Family Resilience and Safeguarding
Benedicte Symcox, Operations Lead for Family Voice Surrey

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Operations Lead for Family Voice Surrey shared her excitement at seeing employees at the Children's Single Point of Access (CSPA) working in such a collaborative and nurturing manner in their endeavour to help Surrey's most vulnerable families. They informed the Committee that they were very grateful to have been given the opportunity to visit the CSPA. All Members agreed with this sentiment and stated that they had been very impressed by the visit, the setup of the CSPA, and all the improvements that had been made since its inception.
2. The Operations Lead expressed their concern that very few parents of SEND children were aware of the CSPA. They also highlighted ongoing difficulties vis-a-vis gaining support either from early help or from the Children With Disabilities team; lack of knowledge about CSPA could have been contributing to the problems that parents faced when trying to access early help.

3. The Chairman asked about some IT difficulties that Members were informed of at the visit. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that there was an end-to-end review underway and the computer system was being upgraded to the newer Windows 10. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that they would raise the IT issues again at the performance meeting.
4. The Vice Chairman of the Select Committee stated that a number of head teachers of small schools with part-time Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) had very little support with children with difficult needs and thus would benefit from having someone to talk to about how to cope with supporting such children. They said that they would like to see an increase in the level of support and counselling for head teachers who were managing traumatised children.

Actions/Further information to be provided:

- i) For Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families to raise IT issues in the service at the subsequent performance meeting.

**15 HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT POLICY
PUBLIC CONSULTATION [Item 7]**

Witnesses:

Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All Age Learning

Mary Burguieres, Assistant Director of Systems and Transformation –
Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture

Benedicte Symcox, Operations Lead for Family Voice

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member for All Age Learning informed Members that the public consultation, which involved focus groups and Family Voice, on home to school/college travel and transport would be concluding on 15 December. They explained that the consultation had essentially been divided into two sections: how to better support independence and preparation for adulthood and a review of the discretionary provision. They stated that high-level analysis of the feedback received from the consultation would be undertaken.
2. The Cabinet Member described that the consultation comprised face-to-face meetings with families, organisations, carers and head teachers, online consultations and focus groups with children.

3. The Assistant Director of Systems and Transformation summarised the Home to School/College Travel and Transport Policy Public Consultation overview document. Regarding 'independent travel', they informed the Committee that this would mean different things for different children at different stages of their lives and that the service had been looking at how independence could be facilitated and better supported. They stated, however, that parents had concerns regarding their children being able to cope with the risks associated with travelling independently.
4. The Cabinet Member for All Age Learning stated that they would be looking at how to communicate effectively to both parents and children the key benefits of independent travel. Pertaining to 'collection points', the Assistant Director of Systems and Transformation explained that these were well regarded and seen as a step towards independence. Providing they were assessed for suitability, the Assistant Director stated that a range of locations could be used as collection points. Finally, the Assistant Director raised her concern that the travel allowance was not well used and there was a need to understand the barriers to uptake and how it could be made more attractive. They identified the key benefits of a travel allowance as flexibility (especially regarding extracurricular activities after school) and shorter journey times to and from schools, whilst the most significant barriers were distance from schools and lack of suitable public transport. They stated that, overall, the council was spending up to three times more than its statistical Local Authority comparators and yet this overspend had not translated into a better service.
5. The Chairman of the Select Committee asked the Operations Lead for Family Voice how the organisation had been dealing with the issues (above) raised by the Cabinet Member for All Age Learning. The Operations Lead highlighted the difficulty that parents of SEND children had with interacting with their child's school (due to distance). They stated, firstly, that the travel allowance had been perceived as being unfair and incurring costs for families and, secondly, that the work of Family Voice indicated that the proposed changes to home-to-school travel were likely to cause a loss of trust in the council's SEND strategy. They stressed the importance of the council maintaining trust with parents and carers for the SEND transformation programme. Whilst Family Voice agreed with the council that decreasing travel distance for all ages was key, the Operations Lead relayed the organisation's concern that children who had been placed in a specialist nursery were no longer being provided transport, which was preventing some from receiving the early intervention that they needed. They suggested, firstly, that savings could be made within the statutory provision of support and, secondly, decreasing the distance that nursery level children had to travel for specialist placements. They informed the Committee that parents would like a response and advice on how to get the right support.
6. The Vice Chairman informed Members that a witness statement from the head teacher at Brooklands School reflected the concerns of the Operations Lead and suggested that recommissioning of places close to home should be a priority.

7. The Assistant Director agreed that travel distance needed to be solved first, but that this would take time. They stressed, firstly, that issues of safety were paramount to parents and, secondly, the service wanted to ensure in its communication with parents that it was striking the right balance between safety and supporting independence. The Operations Lead for Family Voice stated the importance of conveying the right message regarding independent travel to those parents with very vulnerable children.
8. The Operations Lead for Family Voice asked whether there would be an opportunity for people to give comments before the final decision was made. The Cabinet Member for All Age Learning stated that the consultation would close on 15 December and Officers would pull together the feedback alongside the equality impact assessment. The Chairman of the Select Committee informed the Operations Lead for Family Voice that feedback could still be made following the end of the consultation.
9. The Chairman asked for Members' comments on the consultation. A Member of the Committee said they favoured having transport for the whole academic year for a child, regardless of when that child turned eight years old. The Operations Lead for Family Voice stated that a child's school year was far more relevant than their birthday and they also conveyed parents' beliefs that transport support should be the same for all the children in that year group. The Chairman stated that they believed in equity of provision and therefore believed if a child was born in September, they would benefit more than a child born in July, for example.
10. The Assistant Director informed Members that there were no proposed changes to the travel allowance because they believed this did not pose as much of a barrier as travel distance and the availability of suitable public transport.

Actions/Further information to be provided:

- i) Response to parents with advice regarding how to get the right support for their child.

**16 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
[Item 8]**

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chairman stated that the Committee would scrutinise the budget in January 2020.

2. The Director of Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture suggested that a review be carried out in September 2020 of the grades of schools in Surrey to ensure they continue to do as well as they have done.

Liz Bowes left the meeting at 3.19pm

3. The Chairman suggested that the item on Schools Alliance for Excellence be rescheduled from the January meeting to the Select Committee meeting in March. The Director of Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture stated that this would lead to more effective discussion of the overarching impact of the framework.
4. The Chairman stated that the reports from the commissioner should be included in the January Select Committee meeting.
5. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families informed the Committee that scrutiny of the corporate parenting strategy needed to take place at the January 2020 meeting, before Council meets to consider it in March.
6. The Chairman stated that the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Board annual report should be added to the agenda for the Select Committee meeting in March 2020.

Resolved:

The Committee Forward Work Programme be updated to include the above proposed items.

17 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 9]

The next meeting of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee would be held on 21 January 2020 in Council Chamber, County Hall at 10:00.

Meeting ended at: 3.22pm

Chairman

Meeting ended at: Time Not Specified

Chairman