

MINUTES of the meeting of the **CHILDREN & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 27 November 2014 at Committee Room C, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Monday, 26 January 2015.

Elected Members:

- * Dr Zully Grant-Duff (Chairman)
- * Mr Denis Fuller (Vice-Chairman)
- Mrs Liz Bowes
- * Mr Ben Carasco
- * Mr Robert Evans
- * Mr David Goodwin
- * Mr Ken Gulati
- Mrs Margaret Hicks
- * Mr Colin Kemp
- * Mrs Mary Lewis
- * Mrs Marsha Moseley
- * Mr Chris Townsend

Ex officio Members:

Mrs Sally Ann B Marks, Vice Chairman of the County Council
Mr David Munro, Chairman of the County Council

Co-opted Members:

- Cecile White, Parent Governor Representative
- * Derek Holbird, Diocesan Representative for the Anglican Church
- * Mary Reynolds, Diocesan Representative for the Catholic Church

Substitute Members:

Richard Wilson

In attendance:

53/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Liz Bowes, Cecile Dorvault, Margaret Hicks and Simon Parr.

Richard Wilson was in attendance as a substitute for Margaret Hicks.

54/14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 18 SEPTEMBER 2014 [Item 2]

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

55/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

No declarations of interest were received.

56/14 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

No questions or petitions were received.

57/14 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

A response from the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning is detailed in the agenda.

58/14 SURREY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT [Item 6]

Witnesses: Alex Waters, Chair of Surrey Safeguarding Children Board

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chair of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) introduced the report and informed the Committee that the board was a statutory partnership established in 2006. The Chair commented that the key function of the Board was to co-ordinate safeguarding arrangements across the partner organisations, and ensure their effectiveness. The Committee was informed that the four targeted priorities for the Board, as outlined in the report, would continue into 2015/16.
2. The Committee queried what efforts were made to understand the impact of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Surrey, and what evidence there was to understand the effectiveness of the multi-agency CSE strategy outlined in the report. The Chair of SSCB informed the Committee that CSE had been identified as a priority of national concern, and that there was an increasing understanding and awareness of it amongst safeguarding agencies. It was expressed that part of managing the impact of CSE was about increasing

awareness and prevention, and that the SSCB receives regular updates from the sub-groups implementing the strategy. The Committee was informed that there was no national benchmarking data available on CSE, consequently it was not possible to make comparisons between Surrey and other areas. The Committee discussed with witnesses how the data on the impact of CSE in Surrey could be gathered and used to assess the effectiveness of the multi-agency CSE strategy.

3. The Committee was informed that a CSE referral pathway was in the process of being developed, and that this would ensure safeguarding agencies were clear about how to support those at risk of CSE, and how to signpost children and young people to the appropriate services.
4. The Committee raised a question about how the implementation and impact of the Domestic Abuse checklist detailed in the agenda pack was being measured. The Chair of the SSCB commented that an audit of cases where Domestic Abuse was a factor was routinely undertaken. The Committee was informed that the multi-agency response to domestic abuse was felt to be working well, but that specialist support needed to be further developed so that it was accessible consistently across Surrey.
5. There was a discussion about how the SSCB engaged with young people. The Committee was informed that a project would be undertaken through 2014/15 to explore further the experiences of children and young people subject to a Child Protection plan or being Looked After. This work would use these experiences to identify where there were areas for service improvement. The Committee was informed that Section 11 audits were being used to establish how different organisations, such as Independent Schools and private health providers, put in place appropriate safeguarding policies and processes.
6. The Committee queried whether the Local Authority Designated Officer had encountered instances where allegations had been wrongly made against staff in schools. The Chair commented that the data collected did not suggest there should be concerns about the number of allegations which proved to be false.
7. The Committee queried what engagement had been undertaken with faith groups on the matter of safeguarding. The Chair of the SSCB commented that she would strongly support further involvement with faith communities, and the Committee discussed the potential to do so with the support of the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning and the Diocesan representatives on the Committee.

Recommendations:

The Committee appreciates the role of the SSCB in monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. It understands that acquiring data in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation is not straight-forward. The Committee recommends:

- That the SSCB uses the appropriate area groups, such as the local safety partnerships, and audit mechanisms to further develop the evidence base and preventative work in connection with CSE in Surrey.

The Committee asks that the SSCB shares its findings with the Committee in 6 months time.

- That a representative from the SSCB, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning and Diocesan Representatives on the Committee work together in their respective roles to support engagement with faith communities on safeguarding issues.

59/14 SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL AND SAFEGUARDING UNIT REPORT [Item 7]

Witnesses: Caroline Budden, Deputy Director for Children, Schools and Families

Julian Gordon Walker, Head of Safeguarding

Vicky Stobbart, Executive Nurse, Director of Quality and Safeguarding

Jon Savell, Detective Superintendent

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee was informed that prevention work on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was being supported through the development of a risk assessment tool, intended for early identification of those at risk of CSE. The Committee was also asked to note that 'Chelsea's Choice' had been offered to all secondary schools in Surrey, as well as a number of non-mainstream education provisions.
2. The Detective Superintendent informed the Committee that Surrey Police made any victim of CSE its first priority, with the safety of the victim ensured while the Police gathered evidence. The Committee was informed that Surrey Police had not targeted specific communities, but had engaged with those community groups where there was a perceived additional risk. This was in order to ensure resources were in place to help communities identify where individuals may be at risk.
3. The Committee discussed the role of different partners in identifying those at risk of CSE, and how a multi-agency approach was required. The Committee highlighted the role of district and boroughs in reducing the risk of CSE, and how Members who acted both a County Councillor and district or borough Councillor could ensure CSE was given due consideration in such forums. In connection to this, the Committee discussed the role of district and borough councils and Surrey Police in working to educate and support local communities, and reduce the risk of CSE.

4. There was a discussion around the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and officers highlighted how communication had improved due to the co-location of Surrey Police and Children's Services staff. The Committee was informed about the procedures in place to ensure that partners shared information about children living in the home when there were instances of domestic abuse.
5. The Committee was informed that a number of identified young people where CSE was considered a factor were 15-16 year old females. The role of the Youth Support Service was highlighted in this regard, with officers commenting that it was necessary with victims of CSE to build trust over time needing long-term engagement. The Committee was told there were 20 social work practitioners in the Youth Support Service, providing support and consultation.
6. The Committee discussed the causes of neglect with officers, and asked what work was undertaken to identify how these could be addressed. The Committee was informed that the neglect strategy had recently been signed off by the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board. The role of early help was highlighted as assisting with prevention and detection of those at risk of neglect. It was noted that teenage pregnancy had been identified by the SSCB as an area for further focus. The Committee was informed that the issue of neglect was a complex area, and that it often required support for the whole family.
7. The Committee discussed the attendance of GPs at Child Protection Conferences. The Committee noted the poor attendance record for a second year running and considered it to be a serious and recurrent issue. It queried whether there was a case for changing the statutory requirement, for example by accepting clinical expertise provided by other health professionals instead. The importance of proper clinical expertise was highlighted by officers and witnesses, it was also highlighted that the statutory timescales for Initial Child Protection Conferences presented a significant challenge in improving GP attendance. The Committee was informed that reports were requested when GPs could not attend, and that the number of reports being provided had shown signs of improvement over the last year. Witnesses commented that GP attendance at Child Protection Conferences was considered a national challenge and issue, with a number of pilots being developed around video conferencing and similar initiatives. The role of school nurses and health visitors were also highlighted as being important in providing health-related input for Child Protection Conferences.

Recommendations:

- The Committee supports the Neglect Strategy and requests an update on the effectiveness of the Neglect Working Plan in six months time.

The Committee supports the work of the Safeguarding Unit in promoting understanding and risk assessment in relation to CSE and in the development

of support services for children and young people deemed to be at risk. It recommends:

- That Surrey County Council actively engages with District and Borough councils and Surrey Police to consider how the risk of Child Sexual Exploitation can be reduced through regulatory licensing, in particular taxi licensing and in respect of activities described as "Licensable Activities" by the Licensing Act 2003.

The Committee requests that an update on the progress of this work is brought to a meeting in six months time.

- That the Cabinet note the importance of the Youth Support Service and Children's Services in reducing the risk and supporting young people at risk of CSE, and that any future strategy and financial planning ensures that both Services are suitably resourced to address CSE and safeguarding in Surrey.

The Committee recognises the difficulty in ensuring GP attendance at Initial Child Protection Conferences. It also recognises the value of a written report being provided. It recommends:

- That the Safeguarding Unit engages the CCG Clinical Leads in developing and monitoring the improvement plan and that progress be reported to the committee in 6 months time.

60/14 SCHOOLS AND SAFEGUARDING UPDATE [Item 8]

Witnesses: P-J Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Schools & Learning
 Ian McGraw, Education Safeguarding Advisor, Schools and Learning
 David Monk, Headteacher, Pond Meadow School (representing Special Phase Council)
 Ron Searle, Headteacher, Warwick School (representing Secondary Phase Council)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Children & Education Select Committee received verbal updates from the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning, and representatives from the Secondary Phase Council and Special School Phase Council.
2. The Committee heard from witnesses about the role of schools in identifying and sharing safeguarding concerns, and how the partners on the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) have worked to raise awareness in schools of key safeguarding issues, such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Witnesses highlighted that some of the training and information could be adapted to take into account younger age groups or those with special educational needs.
3. The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning stressed that she considered supporting schools on the issue of safeguarding children and young people to be a priority. Accordingly, she informed the Committee of her wish to engage further with the SSCB, and to work with her Cabinet colleagues to identify what more could be done to support schools on the matter of safeguarding. She also highlighted

that there was a need to engage with all Surrey schools on these matters.

4. The Committee noted that the Section 11 audits, being undertaken in all maintained schools in the autumn term, would provide evidence about the safeguarding policies and procedures schools have in place. Phase council witnesses commented that so far the audits had proved useful in ensuring schools were compliant with safeguarding guidance.
5. The Committee discussed how safeguarding information was shared between the police and schools. It was informed that the "Coming to Notice" protocol was where a school was notified if a child or young person was subject to or had witnessed a safeguarding incident. Phase council witnesses expressed the view that there was sometimes a delay in this information being shared. However, it was highlighted that caution was exercised to ensure that the right information was shared with appropriate people. The Committee was also informed that the protocol of repeated absences in schools is managed by area teams.

Recommendations:

- That the Cabinet Member for Schools & Learning, the Cabinet Member for Children & Families and Cabinet Associate work to re-develop the Council's policy on safeguarding in all Surrey schools. It is suggested the Section 11 audits for schools are used to identify key themes in this regard.
- That the Directorate and Surrey Police continue to monitor how effectively and how promptly appropriate information about safeguarding concerns is passed onto schools.
- The Committee invites the Phase Councils, Surrey Police and the Directorate to make representations on what impact there has been in this area in 12 months time.
- That the Chairman of the Committee writes a letter of support, on behalf of the Committee, for Chelsea's Choice to accompany any future application to the Surrey Education Trust or other grant-giving bodies.
- That the Directorate and SSCB look at the expansion of a CSE education and training programme to younger age groups, and how materials can be adapted for those with special educational needs.

61/14 CHILDRENS SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT [Item 9]

Witnesses: Caroline Budden, Deputy Director of Children, Schools and Families
Belinda Newth, Head of Rights and Participation

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee was informed that there was an increase in the number of complaints received by Children Services from children and

young people currently being supported. It was noted this was considered positive as it shows young people were able to access the complaints system, and that this indicated openness and transparency. It was added that complaints promote learning and development within the service.

Recommendations:

The Committee:

- Endorse the areas for improvement identified, including the use of peer reviews to promote and share best practice.

And recommend:

- that officers from the Rights and Participation Service and Democratic Services work to develop a future proposal for ways in which the views of children, young people and their families can be used to support the Committee in its scrutiny role.

62/14 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: REVIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S FINANCES [Item 10]

Witnesses: Caroline Budden, Deputy Director for Children, Schools and Families

Sheila Jones, Head of County-wide Services
David John, Audit Performance Manager
Revinder Hothi, Auditor

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee noted the report and were informed that there had been an update in relation to the action plan. The Committee was informed that Children's Services now had a full record of every child that held a Junior Individual Saving Account (JISA). The details of children in receipt of the Child Trust Fund (CTF) were being delayed as it required information from the Share Foundation. However, it was anticipated this would be resolved in the months ahead. It was noted that a number of procedures had been updated in line with the Management Action Plan and that a follow-up by Internal Audit would be undertaken.

Recommendations:

- The Committee notes progress against the Management Action Plan, and commends officers for their prompt response to areas of concern identified in the audit. It requests that Internal Audit circulate the follow-up of the Management Action Plan once completed to provide a final assurance on this area.

63/14 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE TASK GROUP - INTERIM REPORT [Item 11]

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning noted the report and requested the wording be amended in relation to maintained schools. It was suggested this be worded as Surrey state-funded schools, and the Committee agreed.

Recommendations:

a) That the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning, in conjunction with the Assistant Director for Schools and Learning, develops a new LA governor nomination process.

That the new process operates under the following principles:

- Candidates to be considered by a nomination panel set up with a clear delegation of responsibilities;
 - That the LA governor nominee's skills match the required skills of the individual governing body, in order to maximise their effectiveness;
 - That appropriate checks are made as to the suitability of a candidate;
 - That the local Member is informed of any LA governor vacancy, and then invited to put forward a candidate for consideration and join the nomination panel;
 - That a nomination is made within 20 working days of the Council receiving formal notification of a vacancy or a re-nomination request, in order to ensure vacancy rates and the costs of administering the process are kept to a minimum
- b) That the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning and the Children, Schools and Families Directorate makes arrangements for a regular forum for all Local Authority governors to discuss the responsibilities and priorities of the Council.
- c) That the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning and the Assistant Director for Schools and Learning encourage all Surrey state-funded schools to hold open governors' meetings, to be conducted according to an engagement protocol as agreed by the governing body.

64/14 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 12]

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee received and noted the Recommendations Tracker and Forward Work Programme.

65/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 13]

The next Children and Education Select Committee will be held on Monday 26 January 2015 at 10.00am.

Meeting ended at: 12.50 pm

Chairman