

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 6 March 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 Wednesday, 26 June 2019.

**Elected Members:**

- \* Mr Chris Botten (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Mrs Liz Bowes
- \* Mr Robert Evans
- \* Mr Tim Evans
- \* Mrs Kay Hammond (Chairman)
- \* Mrs Julie Iles
- \* Mrs Yvonna Lay
- \* Mrs Mary Lewis
- \* Mr Peter Martin
- \* Mrs Lesley Steeds
- \* Mr Chris Townsend
- \* 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
- \* Mr Mike Wainhouse, Parent Governor's Association

**In attendance**

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

Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning

Meeting ended at: 12:28

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**Chairman**

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

None were received.

**23 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 16 NOVEMBER 2018 [Item 2]**

These were agreed as an accurate record.

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

Tanya Quddus advised that she was a Children's Centre Governor at Walton and Weybridge.

**25 QUESTIONS & PETITIONS [Item 4]**

None were received.

**26 RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]**

No issues were referred to the Cabinet.

**27 CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING CARE ASSESSMENTS INTERNAL AUDIT [Item 6]**

**Witnesses:**

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

Dave Hill, Executive Director - Children, Families & Learning

Rachel Wigley, Interim Director of Financial Insights

David John, Audit Manager

Reem Burton, Principal Auditor

**Key points raised in the discussion:**

1. After a brief overview of the audit, the auditors advised the Committee that their key wish was to see the Liquid Logic IT system fully implemented in Children's Services alongside basic user processes as this would realise immediate improvements. The cultural issues identified would take longer to change. The Executive Director took the findings seriously but reminded the Committee that it took place during a period of significant staff upheaval.
2. The Executive Director identified two key challenges: quality of social work and the financial controls and systems. The implementation of the IT system had not been good, taking it away from the core product, and this was under review with the supplier. Gateway Teams were now controllers of packages of care costs working with social workers in a break from the past practice of social workers deciding on placements. The result of this was a significant budget underspend.
3. Auditors were questioned as to the culpability of individuals in the poor practice found in the audit report. The Audit Manager explained that this issue was due to poor embedding of the IT system and a lack of understanding around the importance of using the system properly not individual behaviour.
4. The Audit Manager stated that the weaknesses in the use of the IT system were widespread and these problems had been known by historical management but never dealt with. The Executive Director reassured the Committee that there was an almost entirely new leadership team now in place and improvement action was underway.
5. The Vice-Chairman thought that a follow-up audit was required to test the Executive Director's assurances that the situation had improved. The Audit Manager would work with the service to scope and plan a follow-up audit at the optimum time. The Executive Director welcomed input from critical friends, outlining the other ways the Directorate had been challenged including Ofsted inspection, peer review and by the Children's Commissioner.

6. The witnesses clarified the timeline of the audit for the Committee. It was commissioned by the incoming Chief Executive last year and reported informally in May 2018. The Executive Director began in April and independently identified issues with gatekeeping of costs and the quality of placements. New processes were in the planning stage during the summer and were implemented from September. Internal Audit commented that it had been difficult to get the service to engage with the draft findings during this period.
7. A Member queried the role of Finance in helping Children's Services control costs; it had been suggested their role was transactional rather than supportive and it was hoped that this would change. The Director of Financial Insights explained that the Finance Improvement project work was working to develop processes and enable services to improve too. Finance would contribute to the improvements needed in the IT system including the use of ContrOCC, a financial administration package.
8. Internal Audit would like to see set processes and procedures introduced recognised and understood by all staff. The Executive Director envisaged the review of, and improvements to the use of the IT system would take six months to complete.
9. The Cabinet Member reflected that the item had demonstrated to the Committee what a service twice rated inadequate looked like as Ofsted reports can often simplify the problems. The service had been defined by a theme of crisis management and the report showed the implications of this. It would be difficult to change the whole culture but this would start with implementing compliance with basic processes.

**RESOLVED:**

1. The Committee wishes to see a follow-up Internal Audit scheduled on care assessments in June or July 2019 with findings reported to this Committee at its November meeting.
2. This audit should cover progress on the review and improvement of the LCS system including ContrOCC and commentary on the success of the Gateway Team in improving the quality and cost of placements and the roll out of training to social workers.

**28 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES TRANSFORMATION [Item 7]**

**Witnesses:**

Julie Iles, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning

Liz Mills, Director of Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture  
Zarah Lowe, SEND Programme Manager

**Key points raised in the discussion:**

*Tim Evans briefly left the room during this item*

1. The Director advised the Committee that the council would co-produce a new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) service based on the principles in the consultation. Improvements have been made based SEN inspections but this was not transformative and confidence in the council is still low. A Systems Leaders Partnership Board had been established to take improvement work forward.
2. The Vice-Chairman queried how the service would restore trust and confidence in the council. The Director explained that they wanted to have clear and open lines of communication with families and that complaints were now responded to within 24 hours. Detailed work had also been done with SEN Coordinators in schools involving other partners.
3. The Committee asked how this transformation work would align with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) recommissioning work and were told this was integral to transformation and would align through single pathways, shared definition of need and from a single front door that offered guidance and advice.
4. The Committee commented that it was hearing lots of strategic language - what was the frontline impact? The Director told the Committee that they had created information packages using families' own language to create case studies and young people would be making audio and video diaries too.
5. The experience of many families was that it was hard to see professionals and many Members confirmed this from personal experience. The Director reassured the Committee that this is where investment was being targeted but admitted that it was difficult to recruit and retain in certain professions such as Occupational Therapy. The council would lobby for funding to invest in training people in these professions.
6. The topic of exclusions was raised. The service was working to reduce the number of children affected as last year there 14 permanent exclusions in primary schools and 63 in secondary school with many more fixed term exclusions. Officers undertook a study of what happened in each exclusion and found that problems would arise over a period of just one or two terms. The Inclusion Team's role was to pick up early signs of trouble and was having some effect.
7. A Member asked how Surrey compared with the rest of the country in terms of SEN and the Director advised the county was an outlier in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and this situation was the basis for transformation. The Director went on to describe how funding was locked in the statutory services which prompted parents to seek EHCPs for their children. If funding could be redirected to other services it could reduce the need for these plans and reduce costs.
8. The Chairman pointed out that communication and trust were issues for the council and that the consultation showed that parents don't think they will get the right services without an EHCP. The Director

agreed these were important areas of focus. The Programme Manager stated that the service were committed to having a joint plan by the end of April for service re-provision.

9. The Cabinet Member made it clear to the Committee that the transformation work was not about reducing services but about re-provision and that the council needed its partners to help make families' experience better. Transformation work would include upskilling staff in schools and universal setting as well parents to support children with additional needs. The council would aim to develop integrated teams of therapists and had completed a restructure to change to locality teams.

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the service's indicators for measuring performance form part of the information reviewed by the new Performance Sub-Group.

## **29 FAMILY RESILIENCE PHASE 1: CHILDREN'S CENTRES [Item 8]**

### **Witnesses:**

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

Jacquie Burke, Director for Family Resilience and Safeguarding  
Nigel Denning, Interim Consultant for Early Help

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

*Liz Bowes and Robert Evans briefly left the room during this item  
Victoria Young left the meeting at 12:15*

1. The Director for Family Resilience and Safeguarding covered the rationale for the change to children's services. The critical differences were that the council had to have a coherent offer that everyone, residents, partners and practitioners included, understood. The council's front door would change from the current Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) model to integrated co-located teams based on a family safeguarding hub and early help hub models.
2. The Chairman sought clarification on the early help advisory boards that existed to support the early help offer in districts and boroughs. The consultant advised that these were still part of the transformation plan but needed to be understood as part of the new structure of children's services. The Committee emphasised to officers that Local Members needed to know who the new staff taking on these boards were.
3. A Member of the Committee sought more information on the difference between the existing MASH approach and the new family safeguarding and early help hubs and assurances that this would represent significant change. The Director replied

that there had been criticism of the MASH set up from the Children's Commissioner. It had been overwhelmed by the number of referrals as the council had told its partners to refer in any situation whereas elsewhere partners manage contacts themselves. The Director had reviewed requirements for consent and other Authorities practice. This had led to partners being asked to obtain consent before referral. In February the council's levels of need and what services might be provided were relaunched which was a departure from past practice.

4. The Director further explained that if a child's need met the threshold for statutory services this referral would go to assessment teams therefore bypassing any need to go through the MASH information gathering process. If there was uncertainty about the level of need the case would then go through the Family Safeguarding hub to make a decision.
5. The officers were asked if they were happy with the level of response to the consultation and how they would monitor the implementation of the new family resilience model under different providers. Witnesses reported that the level of engagement provided a rich source of information and that there had been a lot of dialogue with parents and families outside of the consultation too. All providers would work to same contract and service specification including key performance indicators which would allow for consistency.
6. The Committee queried how residents would cope with the loss of other universal services that were provided in children's centres such as breastfeeding clinics and support for those with post-natal depression. The new model was still about providing services across the county without relying on existing buildings. Officers were working with partners to repurpose the departed venues for these kinds of services. The Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning recounted recent discussions on reshaping cultural services including libraries which would be relevant for this transformation work.
7. A Member of the Committee questioned the evidence base for the family safeguarding model and where else it had been successfully utilised. The Director explained that it was developed in Hertfordshire, a county that shared a number of attributes with Surrey so was a useful fit, and the County Council had been rated inadequate by Ofsted and was now outstanding with much of this improvement owing to the adoption of the new model.
8. The Chairman queried whether the action plan from the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on children's centres was on track. The Interim Consultant advised that this was a dynamic document that would be updated but the new centre model was not yet complete. Once each provider was known an individual implementation plan would be shared with partners. The Chairman reiterated the need for local Members to understand the plans for their local areas.

9. The Director was asked for assurances that the restructuring of the Directorate was going to deliver savings and better outcomes. The savings attached to the restructure have been achieved, however, assimilating staff into new posts and the development of a new culture would be a longer journey. The recent Ofsted findings showed that the Directorate was more self-aware but the Director cautioned the Committee as the scale of change was not without risk and stated that the council was reliant on good relationships with our partners.
10. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families closed the item by telling the Committee that the council was looking at examples of best practice rather than inventing our own as had been the case with the MASH. The changes to children's social care model would be a gain for the children and families that need it most.

### **RESOLVED**

1. The recommendation made under Item 7 would include the indicators for measuring performance discussed for Family Resilience.

### **30 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 9]**

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

1. A Member queried whether the proposed item on CAMHS scheduled for June was on track. It was confirmed that this item was expected for the next meeting.
2. The Committee agreed the remainder of the forward plan.

### **31 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: 26 JUNE 2019 [Item 10]**

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