

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Thursday 20th March 2014 at 10.00a.m.

PRESENT: County Councillor R.P. Jordan (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Blakebrough, P.R. Clarke, P.S. Farley, L. Guppy, P. Jones, M. Powell and A.C. Watts.

County Councillor G.C. Burrows attended the meeting by invitation of the Chairman.

ADDED MEMBERS:

Voting:

Revd. Dr. S. James (Church in Wales)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. S. McGuinness	-	Chief Officer, Children and Young People
Mr. S. Burch	-	Chief Officer, Social Care and Health
Ms. T. Jelfs	-	Head of Children's Services
Mr. W. McLean	-	Head of Strategic Partnerships
Mr. M. Howcroft	-	Assistant Head of Finance
N. Wellington	-	Finance Manager
Mr. R. Long	-	Children's Services Accountant
Mr. M. Gatehouse	-	Improvement Officer
Ms. H. Illett	-	Scrutiny Manager
Mr. R. Williams	-	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.- Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors J. George, D.W.H. Jones, S. Jones and from Mr. G. Murphy (NAHT) and Mr. K. Plow (Monmouthshire Association of School Governors).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.- Declarations of interest are identified under the relevant minute.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

3.- The minutes of the following meetings of the Children and Young People Select Committee were confirmed and signed by the Chairman, subject to the amendment to the minutes of the meeting dated 28th October 2013, as identified below.

**Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee
dated 20th March 2014 - continued**

- Special Meeting dated 28th October 2013.

Minute 2, Declarations of Interest – County Councillor L. Guppy is employed by Aneurin Bevan Health Board, not a member of the Board.
- Ordinary Meeting dated 14th November 2013.
- Special Meeting dated 27th November 2013.
- Special Meeting dated 10th December 2013.
- Special Meeting dated 20th January 2014.
- Special Meeting dated 23rd January 2014.

PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

- 4.- There were no members of the public present.

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN –
PROGRESS TO DATE**

5.- County Councillor M. Powell declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct as she is a governor of Deri View Primary School and King Henry VIII Comprehensive School.

County Councillor L. Guppy declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct as she is a school governor.

We received an update by the Head of Strategic Partnerships regarding the progress made against the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP).

To support clear understanding of the progress made, the PIAP's milestones and targets have been accorded a status relating to their progress.

Red - Highly problematic – requires urgent a decisive action.

Amber / Red - Problematic – requires substantial attention, some aspects need urgent attention.

Amber / Green – Mixed – aspect(s) require substantial attention, some good.

Green – Good – requires refinement and systematic implementation.

There was also an indicator that represented the level of risk associated with meeting the recommendation and its expectations.

Risk increasing.

**Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee
dated 20th March 2014 - continued**

Staying the same.

Risk reducing.

The Head of Strategic Partnerships outlined the progress of the four work streams, namely:

- Safeguarding
- Standards and Challenge
- Corporate arrangements
- Section 'B' (ALN & Wellbeing)

Having received the Post Inspection Action Plan, the following points were noted:

Safeguarding

Current status – Between Amber / Green and Green – Risk staying the same since the last report.

Standards and Challenge

Current Status – Between Amber / Red and Amber / Green - Risk staying the same since the last report.

Corporate Arrangements

Current Status – Between Amber / Green and Green – Risk staying the same.

Section 'B' (ALN & Wellbeing)

Current Status – Inclusion - Between Amber / Green and Green – Risk reducing.

ALN – Between Amber / Red & Amber / Green - Risk reducing.

Having received the update report, the following points were noted:

Safeguarding

- Estyn has revisited the Authority. The feedback from the Monmouthshire Recovery Board has indicated that significant improvements have been made.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding training courses, the Head of Strategic Partnerships stated that the evaluation of the training had been positive.

Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee dated 20th March 2014 - continued

- It was noted that the Safe Recruitment Training Programme extended to Shared Resource Services staff working in schools. Further training would be provided in May 2014.
- The Education Achievement Service was involved in evaluating security and safety of our schools. There were no schools within Monmouthshire that were in a critical situation.
- More than 1200 Monmouthshire staff, governors and volunteers had attended Level 1 Safeguarding / Child Protection training. The Head of Strategic Partnerships would investigate the percentage of those yet to be trained.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding levels of training, the Chief Officer for Children and Young People informed the Committee that the Local Authority provides Level 1 training. Level 2 and 3 training was provided by the Safeguarding Team. Child protection records were updated every 12 hours.
- The Chief Officer for Children and Young People had recently met with the Education Achievement Service Governor Support Unit to investigate ways to address the lack of take up of training for school governors.

Standards and Challenge

- In response to a Select Committee Members question regarding the January 2014 examination results, the Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that the Welsh Government was carrying out a detailed investigation regarding these examination results across Wales.
- Where examinations have been entered, schools with Special Educational Needs Units need to demonstrate that targets are being met.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding teachers' morale, the Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that currently, there was not a mechanism in place to identify teachers' morale in schools. However, she would raise this matter at the next Directors' meeting.
- Staff were facing potential redundancies year on year which could have a detrimental effect on morale. However, the Council endeavours to minimise redundancies by re-deploying staff where possible.
- Steady progress was being made at all Key Stages.

**Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee
dated 20th March 2014 - continued**

- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding a comparison of the numbers of school based redundancies between the Council and other authorities, the Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that she would liaise with Personnel to ascertain this information.
- A stocktake of Monmouthshire's secondary schools' performance had been undertaken earlier this year and it was expected that schools' performance would further improve on last year's performance with targets likely to be met or exceeded in some cases.

Corporate Arrangements

- A Head of Service Post had been declined by the applicant and a redistribution of roles had been undertaken.

Section 'B' (Additional Learning Needs (ALN) & Wellbeing)

- Good progress was being made.
- The Head of Strategic Partnerships would investigate whether schools have a policy on the use of social media.
- Fixed term exclusions have fallen due to training of staff.
- The strategic review of Additional Learning Needs was underway with events being held in May 2014. Consultation had been widespread involving teachers, parents, pupils, Aneurin Bevan Health Board and SNAP Cymru.

We resolved to receive the update report and noted its content.

REVENUE BUDGET FORECAST STATEMENT 2013/14 MONTH 9

6.- County Councillor L. Guppy declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of the Looked After Children Budget as she is a partner in some Looked After Children Services and she is an employee of Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board.

County Councillor P.S. Farley declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of schools budgets as he is a governor of Chepstow Comprehensive School and the Dell Primary School.

We received a report by the Head of Finance, presented by the Finance Manager and the Assistant Head of Finance in which Members received information on the revenue outturn position of the services relevant to the Children and Young People Select Committee at the end of Quarter 3 for the 2013/14 financial year.

Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee dated 20th March 2014 - continued

Members were informed that the 2013-14 net expenditure budget attributable to Children and Young People Select Committee oversight is £58,680,000. The related annual expenditure forecast, using month 9 data, was £60,217,000 and introduces a £1.54 million overspend.

It was noted that at month 9, the forecast outturn for 2013/14 was as follows:

- Social Care & Health Directorate – Children’s Services were forecasting to over spend by £991,000, principally comprising an increasing pressure on the external placement budget of £437,000 (£363,000 at month 6). Additionally, further increased costs across Young Peoples Accommodation of £186,000 (£154,000 at month 6), and other Children’s area over spends (£368,000) on work experience schemes, transport and legal costs, ‘in house’ fostering allowances and family contact costs.
- Children & Young People Directorate – A reduction in the forecast over spend of £546,000 (£744,000 at month 6) mainly due to School Meals (£130,000) transferring to the Resources and Culture Directorate and £57,000 due to re-alignment of the Management Team. School-based redundancy costs for which reserve cover has been agreed (estimated at £468,000) were the main element of this over spend. The redundancy costs remain within the overspend prediction for address by the service area throughout the year, with any net cost apparent at the end of year funded by Council reserves.
- The more significant aspects of the remaining £78,000 overspend for scrutiny include:
 - A continuing combined funding deficit of £45,000 for the shared School Library Service.
 - In Adult Education, as reported at month 6, there was a continuing £39,000 over spend from costs anticipated to be necessary to compensate for absences and a new £50,000 over spend due to back dated rates bills to 2010.
 - As part of the 2013-14 budget setting process, the service identified savings of £645,000. Of this, £385,000 savings are manifest, leaving £260,000 delayed or impractical. £100,000 related to school meal efficiencies, and since month 6 this service has transferred to the Resources and Culture Directorate, and indications were at month 9 that £25,000 savings were already evident. The remainder related to a previously reported delay in staff restructuring (£110,000) and £50,000 for as yet unidentified Special Educational Needs transport savings.
 - Schools – School balances at the beginning of the financial year amounted to £1,240,000. The forecasted draw on balances at month 9 was £794,000 (£689,000 at month 6) an unfavourable movement of £105,000 resulting in budgeted closing surplus school balances of £447,000.

Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee dated 20th March 2014 - continued

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a Select Committee Member's question, the Head of Children's Services informed the Committee that Special Guardianship Orders were not made until the end of a case. Therefore, a significant amount of money was being spent on this, as well as spending on legal costs. Once the Order has been granted, the cost of caring for the child will be different. A breakdown of the reasons why children were in placements would be made available to the Select Committee.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the County Council's foster care provision, the Service Manager stated that collaborative working was being achieved with other authorities. Whilst foster care fees varied, work was being undertaken to improve the support packages for foster carers in Monmouthshire. In house foster care provision was being increased.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding demand for foster care provision in Monmouthshire, the Service Manager stated that it was not always possible to meet the capacity but there was a small amount of capacity available at present. When using the services of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) an appropriate match for the child was sought.
- The Directorate's budget will cover some of the over spends but not all.
- The over spend on legal costs refers to chambers and court hearing costs.
- The rates bills backdated to 2010, as identified in the budget for the Adult Education Service, had been identified and were being addressed.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding Chepstow Comprehensive School, the Select Committee was informed that a recovery plan for the school had been established.
- The numbers of schools with a deficit budget was reducing year on year as officers had been working closely with schools. This has not been directly attributable to the Estyn report but it has focussed the need for schools with a deficit budget to have established a recovery plan over a three year period.

We resolved to receive the report and note its content.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

7.- County Councillor L. Guppy declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of the Looked After Children

**Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee
dated 20th March 2014 - continued**

Budget as she is a partner in some Looked After Children Services and she is an employee of Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board.

We received a report presented by the Improvement Officer in which Select Committee Members were provided with a report card that considered the Directorate's performance against the objectives and outcomes for Looked After Children that were set out in the Council's Improvement Plan.

Having considered the report, the following points were noted:

- SCC/006 – Percentage of referrals during the year on which a decision was made within 1 working day.

This indicator had fallen to 20th position in the Welsh Ranking. Officers have been looking at data validation. In recent days, the figures have improved, as has its Welsh Ranking.

- SCC/001a – Percentage of first placements of looked after children during the year that began with a care plan in place.

It was noted that performance in respect of this indicator was not at the expected level. However, children were being visited and seen by a social worker but not always at the designated time. The children were not at risk. Work was being undertaken to improve upon this and it was expected that by the end of the fourth quarter improvements will have been made.

- The Head of Children's Services informed the Select Committee that a systems review has been undertaken resulting in a change to how family assessments work making them more family friendly. Considerable time has also been spent addressing capacity issues. There were issues relating to the completion of legal processes within the designated timeframe. Also, I.T. Systems needed to be more intuitive with better joined up services.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question, it was noted that there was a national shortage of social workers. The Head of Children's Services has reviewed the Directorate's recruitment strategy and was looking to use the Senior Practitioner post, currently based in the Peripatetic Team, to become a coordinator regarding Court processes.
- Staff were committed to their roles.
- There were currently three front line staff vacancies. Two staff were on maternity leave.
- A Senior Practitioner has been recruited.

Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee dated 20th March 2014 - continued

We resolved to receive the report and note its content.

CSSIW LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN INSPECTION

8.- We received a report by the Service Manager, Children's Services, in which Select Committee Members received information regarding the upcoming inspection by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) on looked after children and care leavers.

Select Committee Members were informed that CSSIW is completing a national inspection aimed at evaluating and providing assurance in respect of the quality of safeguarding and care planning practice across Wales. The particular focus of this inspection will be 'Looked after Children' (LAC) over 11 years of age, and care leavers. This reflects the particular vulnerabilities associated with this age range. Monmouthshire County Council is due to be inspected between the 7th and 10th April 2014.

The Local Authority has been required to provide data on all looked after children and care leavers who have any of the following vulnerabilities:

- More than three moves in the last 12 months.
- Placed in residential care in the last 12 months.
- Relevant young people living independently.
- LAC placed at home on a care order.
- LAC who are in out of county placements / placed across borders.
- Reported as absconding / missing / absent from placement.
- Subject to a strategy meeting or other relevant multi agency meeting.
- Engaged in challenging behaviour, i.e., behaviour that results in potentially dangerous or frightening consequences for the individual and / or for others.
- Identified as the victims or perpetrator of anti-social behaviour or offending in the last 12 months.
- Not in education employment or training.
- Display or are subject to sexually harmful activity.
- Who are or may be subject to exploitation.
- Identified as engaged in substance misuse / self-harm or needing mental health services.

CSSIW has chosen ten cases to inspect, of which, three will be particularly in-depth and involve reading the file, discussions with all professionals involved, interviews with the child and their family. Inspectors will also meet with a range of relevant professionals and organisations that impact upon services to looked after children and care leavers in the Authority.

It is anticipated that the Inspectorate will find evidence of good efforts by individual workers to build relationships with young people; good efforts to listen to and involve young people in their plans; a willingness to manage risk and a staff group who feel supported by their team managers.

Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee dated 20th March 2014 - continued

It was noted that areas for development are likely to be in relation to formalising policies and procedures to ensure consistency across the service; improved workforce stability, development of the Children in Care Council to ensure that children and young people are able to influence service developments and improvements and the need for continued leadership through the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. It is likely that issues in relation to partnership working with health regarding those with mental health issues will also be highlighted.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The report was a well-balanced self-assessment.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question, it was noted that the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) was a regional service via the Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board.
- A process was already in place to undertake any necessary changes to care plans.
- The implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy will occur after the CSSIW Inspection.
- It was considered that an all Member Seminar in respect of this matter should be established later in the year.

We resolved to receive the report and note its content.

WORK PROGRAMME

9.- We resolved to receive the updated version of the Children and Young People Select Committee Work Programme.

In doing so, the Scrutiny Manager informed the Select Committee of the following:

- The Annual Council Reporting Framework report will be received by the Children and Young People Select Committee on 1st May 2014. Adults Select Committee Members will be invited to attend this meeting to jointly scrutinise this item only.
- A special meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee will be held at County Hall, Usk, on Tuesday 15th April 2014 at 10.00am.

We therefore resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

**Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee
dated 20th March 2014 - continued**

CABINET FORWARD WORK PLANNER

10.- We resolved to receive and note the Cabinet Forward Work Planner.

NEXT MEETING

11.- The next ordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee will be held on Thursday 1st May 2014 at 2.00pm at County Hall, Usk.

The meeting ended at 1.00pm.

**Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee
dated 20th March 2014 - continued**