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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Monday, 13th November, 2017 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor M.Groucutt (Chairman)
County Councillor L.Jones (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: R. Harris, D. Jones, M.Lane, M. Powell,
T.Thomas, and S. Woodhouse

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. M. Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Claire Marchant	Chief Officer Social Care, Health & Housing
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Jane Rodgers	Safeguarding Service Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors L.Brown, J.Watkins, Dr. A. Daly and
K Plow (Association of School Governors)

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Delivering Excellence in Children's Services'. The Next phase.....

The Head of Children's Services provided a presentation to introduce the overarching theme of 'Delivering Excellence in Children's Services...The Next Phase...' in the following three reports.

3. Workforce - Meeting Increasing Service Demands

Purpose:

The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Children's and Young People's Select Committee with a summary of the workforce proposals for the next phase of the 'Delivering Excellence in Children's Services' Programme, and to allow pre-decision scrutiny of the evidence base and business cases to support the proposals as set out in this report.

Key issues:

1. In January 2016 Council approved a reconfiguration in the way in which we deliver as services within Children's Services as part of the overarching transformation programme 'Delivering Excellence in Children's Services'. The report sets out the next phase of the transformation programme of the workforce elements of four teams:
 - Early Help, Duty & Assessment Team
 - Family Support & Protection Team
 - Placement & Support Team
 - Business Support Team.

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2. There continues to be an upward trend in the numbers of Looked After Children and Young People, children on the Child Protection Register and increases in the number and complexity of child care cases within the service which in turn require more resources to both ensure the child's safety and well-being and to meet statutory requirements. The increases in Monmouthshire are in line with regional and national trends.
3. The demand pressures have resulted in the need to recruit agency social workers to help meet statutory requirements and to reduce and manage the risk of harm to vulnerable children and young people creating additional budgetary pressure and not achieve a stable and permanent workforce.
4. Over the last six months the service has implemented live dashboards to track and record case load activity and complexity providing an overview of the pressures and capacity across the whole service to ensure that the allocation of workforce resources is optimised. Work with each family is monitored, reviewed and remains outcome focused.
5. Current analysis of service demand versus resources has highlighted two teams under particular pressure (the Early Help, Duty & Assessment and the Family Support & Protection Team); one team has some potential to release resource (Placement & Support Team), and 3 teams are resourced correctly including Business Support.
6. This information has informed understanding of 'safe' case load standards. It is recognised that manageable caseloads are essential to achieving a more stable workforce and to ensure that children receive the best intervention where and when it is needed.
7. Analysis, in the Early Help, Duty and Assessment team indicates the average caseload required to ensure safe practice would be between twenty and twenty five cases per worker. In the Family Support & Protection team the average case load is lower reflecting that this team works with more complex cases (particularly those within court proceedings).
8. The report focuses on recruiting permanent workers coupled with strengthened practice management structure to deliver strong and sustainable services. A stable and consistent workforce allows for continuity of service to families, shared service knowledge and history, and ultimately better outcomes for children.
9. The Service has reduced the average number of agency social workers working within the service. There will be further challenge to reduce the reliance on agency staff if the recommendations in this report are agreed. The Business Case for the recruitment of additional contact workers reflects the sustained increase in the numbers of children looked after by the Local Authority. Consequently this rise in numbers, together with increased demand from the courts, has resulted in the contact team being unable to keep meeting the increasing demand leading to reliance on the use of Independent providers.

Recommendations:

Select Members are requested to scrutinise and consider the key recommendations in this report as follows:

1. Early Help Duty and Assessment Team
 - To convert one Social Worker post into a Senior Practitioner post.
 - To make the temporary Support Worker post into a permanent role within the team.
 - To convert one temporary agency worker assignment into a permanent Social Work post (or 60 hours of Support Worker hours).
2. Family Support and Protection Team
 - To convert three temporary agency worker assignments into three permanent Social Worker posts.

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- To convert of one temporary agency worker assignment into one permanent Senior Practitioner post.
3. Placement and Support / Contact Team
- To increase the contact team by one Contact Support Worker on a six month temporary contract. The purpose of this is to reduce the current costs of spot-purchasing contact worker sessions from independent provider (whilst the second phase of family support review work is undertaken).
 - To implement the full recommendations contained within the review of the Placement and Support Team including i) the formal consultation regarding the deletion of 2 assessing social worker posts from the establishment within the Placement & Support Team and ii) the transfer of resources released from 1 of these posts into the creation of a Social Worker post within the Family Support & Protection Team.
4. Business Support.
- To amalgamate unutilised Business Support hours within the establishment into a permanent business support post.
 - To review and revise the Business Support Manager job description, to provide a key role of supporting the Children's Services with all aspects of workforce planning including staff recruitment and retention.

Members Scrutiny:

It was commented by a Member that there appeared to be a lot of changes from temporary to full time work and questioned if this would make a difference to the numbers employed in the roles described. Secondly, it was queried how much the changes will cost. It was responded that there will be four additional posts in Children's Services section costing approximately £200,000. It was detailed that in the Medium Term Financial Plan, the proposal is to meet the costs from savings in next years' budget plan (e.g. increased use of Mon CC carers not independent carers, replacement of two expensive out of county with in county placements by 2018/19 and pursuing with the Health Board that the Council is correctly resourced for high cost cases).

The Select Committee were reminded to take the reports into account when scrutinising the budget.

The Committee generally felt the proposals made sense noting that the development of a strong, in-house workforce of permanent staff provides continuity and better use of resources in view of the identified upward trend in demand.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that there is a saving of £12-13,000 pa in employing a permanent member of staff as opposed to engaging a supply Social Worker.

Committee Conclusions:

The Select Committee undertook pre-decision scrutiny of the report and acknowledged that the transformation programme is a work in progress. It was supportive of the work carried out so far and appreciated the clear rationale underpinning the proposals.

The Committee was supportive of the recommendations as presented in the report.

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4. Delivery Models for Family Support - Realignment of Team Around the Family (TAF)

Purpose:

The purpose of the report is to provide a case for the realignment of the Team Around the Family service within the wider structure of family support services to better meet the needs of the local population and to contribute to Monmouthshire's delivery of the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act (2014) (SSW-bWA).

Key issues:

1. Currently the TAF team consists of a TAF Co-ordinator and three TAF Project Workers. The function of the team is predominantly one of care co-ordination, assessing families referred for a service, liaising with service providers and coordinating TAF meetings with service providers and families where a package of support is co-ordinated. The TAF team remain involved for between 6 and 12 months with each family, chairing meetings at which progress is reviewed. They currently work with approximately 60 families a year.

2. The TAF Team is funded through Families First. Monmouthshire has a small population. Although it has pockets of deep deprivation, it is generally considered to be an affluent community, this means that grant funding such as Families First, is relatively small, and it is essential that resources are focussed so as to achieve the greatest return on investment.

3. The report proposes the focus of the team on TAF is retained, as per Welsh Government policy, but that the activity is re-aligned so that the work of the team focusses more on working directly with vulnerable families on the cusp of statutory intervention to prevent them requiring statutory support. The team will be tasked and supported to delivery brief interventions that are outcomes focussed around what matters to children and families in line with the Social Services and Well-Being Act (SSW-bWA). Working in this way should increase productivity from 60 families a year to 150 families a year.

4. The importance of preventive work and early intervention is well-recognised. It is a fundamental principal of the SSW-bWA. It recognises that providing support at an early stage may well reduce the need for more intensive, and potentially invasive, intervention at a later stage.

5. The value of intervention throughout childhood and adolescence. The arguments for prevention are particularly associated with children and young people, especially under-fives. The social and emotional foundations established in the first three years of a child's life, to a large extent attributable to the standard of parenting, are arguably the biggest determinants of positive outcomes throughout the life course. The benefits of promoting the Welsh Government's aim of giving children a flying start in life are important for all generations. Older people who have experienced positive foundations (e.g. good education and health, strong social networks), are more likely to have a healthier transition into independent old age. However, recent research into adolescent neuroscience indicate that adolescence offers a unique window of opportunity to significantly ameliorate the impact of early trauma and poor parenting.

6. Adverse Childhood Experiences

There is a growing body of evidence that shows how profoundly health throughout the life course is negatively affected by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as verbal/emotional, physical or sexual abuse and neglect, parental separation, incarceration, mental illness, drug and alcohol use or domestic abuse. These stressors are cumulative, the more adverse experiences a child faces, the more likely they are to experience poor outcomes.

7. What Works? Empirical research provides evidence of the value of intervening early, before difficulties become entrenched and long-standing. Macdonald's (2005) research indicates that therapeutic interventions are more likely to be successful if they take account of the broad range of factors outside the family that also have an influence on family functioning.

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8. Whilst there is not an extensive literature on the effectiveness of specific interventions, the provision of services such as play therapy, educational support and speech and language therapy may help address specific deficits around social skills, education and learning and communication (Howe, 2005).

9. In summary, the following features are significant in terms of interventions that are effective and evidence suggests that these features of effective practice are more important than fidelity to a specific model.

- Early-intervention – before difficulties become long-standing
- Early-intervention - attachment-based
- Strengths based
- Relational
- Bespoke – designed around a families individual needs
- Fidelity to specific models where these are used
- Ecological/systemic models

13. The Case for Prioritisation

Whilst it is recognised that there are numerous interventions that would be of benefit to the children and families of Monmouthshire, it is essential that scarce and increasingly limited resources are prioritised to fund services that are judged to provide the greatest impact for the investment. In light of the pressures Monmouthshire faces, the policy and practice imperatives created by the SSWbWA and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Monmouthshire has undertaken a review of children's services. This paper draws on evidence from research and evaluation undertaken by Cordis Bright (2013) and IPC (2016).

14. Welsh Government guidance on Families First and the continuum of support recognises the importance of the whole network of services in supporting families, and in particular identifies a differentiation between services and support for children and families needing early intervention and those needing intensive intervention. The framework is based on research evidence which indicates that different forms of intervention require very different levels of support and skill on the part of those undertaking assessment, care and support.

The IPC analysis identified that whilst there are services available to support families in Monmouthshire, they are fragmented, lacking in an underpinning practice approach or theoretical framework and therefore risk duplication and delay in families accessing the right support at the right time. In particular there are gaps at the edge of statutory intervention (insufficient services to reduce risk and scaffold those families who are not quite managing without support to prevent them coming into statutory services) and the edge of care (insufficient support to reduce risk to families who could, with some time-limited, intensive intervention be supported to enable them to parent safely to avoid their children coming into care).

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made:

1. To realign the activity of the existing TAF Team which currently facilitates the TAF process and undertakes only limited direct work, into a team that predominantly delivers programmes of early intervention family support and undertakes a smaller amount of facilitation of the TAF process.
2. To reconfigure the existing Co-ordinator post into a team-leader post using the anticipated cost saving to provide the necessary capacity to administrate an Early Intervention and Prevention Referral and Intervention Pathway.
3. To locate the service within the Face to Face Therapeutic Service and Intervention Pathway Including the Realignment of the Team Around the Family (TAF) service

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4. To move the Face to Face Therapeutic Service to within the Children's Services management structure to bring increased coherency to the 'windscreen' pathway of family support and intervention.
5. To create a multi-agency Early Intervention and Prevention Referral and Intervention Pathway to manage referral and allocation of children and families seeking pre-statutory services family support (see Appendix 1).
6. To develop a step-up/step-down protocol and referral pathway which enables vulnerable families accessing support at both a pre-statutory threshold level and a post--statutory threshold level to have their needs appropriately met and ultimately reduce the numbers of children requiring statutory support and in particular the need to be Looked After.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member asked for an explanation of Families First funding, and secondly, questioned what regard had been taken of other authorities' LA best practice. It was explained that it is a specific grant which funds the TAF team in entirety to provide the early help/prevention role. The grant does not fund any statutory services, has stringent terms and conditions but funds a range of activities e.g. Acorn Centre. It was confirmed that officers looked extensively at other authorities' best practice and also the systemic IPC review of family support to build the vision based on provision of a key worker for vulnerable families.

In response to a question, it was clarified that 'step up and step down protocol' refers, in this context, to the where a family needing help passes from non-statutory to a statutory level of intervention. The term is also regularly used more generally to define passing between different services.

The Chair commented that effective multi-agency working can be difficult to deliver and queried if any issues are anticipated and how these will be managed. It was agreed that good multi-agency working underpins an early help and support system and some mechanisms are already in place (e.g. Children and Young People Strategic Partnership meeting) to strategically consider outcomes. This work is ongoing.

Considering the changes to the TAF Team, it was questioned if the right staff are in post to deliver the new role. In response, confidence was expressed that the service is staffed by motivated, skilled and well trained individuals.

Committee Conclusions:

The Select Committee undertook pre-decision scrutiny of the report and acknowledged that the transformation programme is a work in progress. It was supportive of the work carried out so far and appreciated the clear rationale underpinning the proposals.

The Committee was supportive of the recommendations as presented in the report related to the realignment of the Team Around the Family (TAF) service.

5. Recommendation arising from our review of Placement and Support Team

Purpose:

The purpose of the report is to provide details of a proposed re-alignment of Monmouthshire Children's Services delivery model specifically in regards to the Placement and Support Team (PAST) and to highlight progress against the targets identified within the initial business case previously endorsed by Cabinet including an outline of next steps.

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Recommendation:

1. That Select Committee provides pre-decision scrutiny regarding:
 - The proposed reconfiguration of 2 assessing social worker posts from the establishment within the PAST.
 - The transfer of resources released from 1 of the posts into the creation of a social worker post within the Support and Protection Team.
 - The transfer of resources released from the 2nd post into a spot-purchasing budget to procure independent assessments as and when required.
 - To progress with reviewing 3 other posts also created within the initial business case i) Psychologist ii) Special Guardianship Worker and iii) Placements and Contracts Officer Post.
 - To transfer the Contact Team from the line management of the PAST to the Service Manager Early Help and Assessment as part of the realignment of Family Support and Edge of Care services.
2. Select members are requested to consider these proposals in the context of:
 - The National Fostering Framework which sets out the direction for more regional approaches to fostering services across Wales (see background papers).
 - The increasing demands and pressures across Monmouthshire Children's Services as set out within the Workforce report.
 - There continues to be an upward trend in the numbers of children Looked After Children, children on the Child Protection Register and Children subject to court proceedings, with corresponding budgetary pressure.
 - The two parallel papers presented regarding Family Support and Workforce.

Key Issues:

1. In 2014 council approved a business case to include as follows:
 - To employ 2 full-time Social Workers with the intention of recruiting more Monmouthshire Foster Carers
 - To employ a part time psychologist to assist with the recruitment and retention of foster carers and promote placement stability
 - To create a Placements and Contracts Officer post to assist with finding and maintaining placements for children in foster care
 - To create a Special Guardianship Order worker to support / increase Special Guardianship Orders within the authority.
2. The PAST Project Board was established in early 2017 to work within the overall Delivering Excellence Programme for Children's Services and specifically to:
 - Review progress against targets in the business case
 - Review the additional posts that had been created within the business case
 - Develop an improvement plan
 - To consider different service delivery options.
3. The Project Board carried out a range of activities in accordance with its aims including:
 - Benchmarking against other Local Authorities and regional partners
 - Development of team dashboards and performance indicators for the PAST
 - Gaining feedback from foster carers
 - Caseload analyses and productivity over the last 5 years
 - Gaining feedback from colleagues in the wider Children's Services arena
4. Outcomes from the review

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- The original business case assumed that increasing staff would, amongst other targets, increase foster carer recruitment and retention and allow more placements to be made with in-house foster carers. However, this was found not to be the case.
- The review data informed us that in comparison to other Local Authority fostering teams our caseloads and productivity remained low.
- That kinship carers were often required within tight timescales of court work, which could make it difficult to manage peaks & troughs. This was found to create delays within the completion of generic fostering assessments.
- The review concluded that further work around systems and processes for the PAST could help improve efficiency.
- In summary, the objectives within the 2014 business case were not fully on target to be met and were therefore not having the required impact on the service. Consequently, the low number of Monmouthshire Foster Carers continues to make us over-reliant on independent fostering agency carers which creates additional budgetary pressure, and does not improve outcomes for our Looked After children and young people.
- The Fostering Project Board is now structured around separate workstreams. Targets are set around the increase in generic carers and the transfer of independent foster carers to Monmouthshire carers.

5. Current Proposals

- Following the overall workforce analysis of demand versus resources, we propose to release one full-time social work resource from PAST to assist with addressing the pressures within the wider Children's Services area where demand currently exceeds resource.
- We propose to reconfigure one full time social work resource to create a budget for spot commissioning Foster Carer Assessments on an as needed basis. This is to help the team manage the peaks and troughs around demand and reduce delay in the completion of generic assessments.
- In line with the Family Support review we propose to move the Contact Team from the management structure of the PAST into that of the Early Help and Assessment service area. This is to achieve a managed network of support services that can be utilised in a more efficient and effective way by coming under the umbrella of one Service Manager.
- In line with the original business case (2014) we propose to continue to review the posts to ensure that they are best aligned to the overall aims of the service and specifically the Fostering Project
- If the proposals within this report are agreed by Cabinet implementation will move forward between January and April 2018.

6.

What will change?	What will be created?
One FTE assessing social work post will be deleted and moved to Family Support and Protection Team	No post will be created as a result of this the fostering team and the post will be retained elsewhere within Children's Services establishment
One FTE assessing social work post will be deleted and the financial resource reconfigured	The released financial resource will remain in the team and used to spot Purchase independent assessments to enable effective response to the peaks and troughs of the assessment work as and when required

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The contact team will move across to the 'front door'.

This will align with the second phase of the family support review

Member Scrutiny:

Members carried out pre-decision scrutiny considering the three reports together relating to "Delivering Excellence in Children's services – The Next Phase..."

Committee Conclusions:

The Select Committee undertook pre-decision scrutiny of the report and acknowledged that the transformation programme is a work in progress. It was supportive of the work carried out so far and appreciated the clear rationale underpinning the proposals.

The Committee was supportive of the recommendations as presented in the report and welcomed the improvements to efficiency.

6. Safeguarding Evaluative Report

Purpose:

This report evaluates the progress of Monmouthshire's key Safeguarding Priorities using identified measures to highlight progress, identify risks and confirm the direction of travel for improvements and further development. It is based on Monmouthshire's safeguarding aim that both adults and children will be supported, and protected, from harm and abuse. It will be set against the safeguarding priorities, which are set within the Corporate Safeguarding policy 2017, with measures reflecting the previous WASG Performance Review March 2017 and has clear links to the Authority's Safeguarding Service Improvement Plan.

Key Issues:

The Evaluation of Safeguarding is relating to information between April 17 –October 17. This period of time saw the restructure and review of Monmouthshire's Corporate Safeguarding Policy and therefore the expectation is that Performance Data collation in certain Safeguarding areas will be developed as identified for future evaluation. Much of the business of Safeguarding is an ongoing process and how we measure the effectiveness of Monmouthshire's Safeguarding Practice will develop as Service Provision across the council develops.

1. Good Governance:

It is recognised that good progress has taken place in regard to previous recommendations made in regard to the Councils Senior and Directorate level. Changes at Regional Board level and within National Policy will required a continued planned response.

2. Safe Workforce

Whilst recognising that Safe Recruitment processes are well embedded, a new corporate roll out of the SAFE audit's across the Authority has been completed. This has highlighted the significant Safeguarding Training programme to ensure the authority is compliant with the Revised Corporate Policy.

3. Preventative Approach

The new focus on the development of a Preventative agenda has led to increased partnership working with developing within Community Hubs and within the Community itself. Changes and ambiguity under the SSWA have changed the responsibility and accountability within early

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support services, and this developing work will need to link carefully within the authorities statutory responsibility.

4. Robust Protection

The Safeguarding Processes have been embedded within Child and Vulnerable Adult protection for a long time. Within Children's Services the ongoing agenda of change has created a good time in which to review current CP processes and procedures, and to ensure staff understand the requirements and expectations of their role and task. Further to this, where pressures both internally and externally are identified safe practice must be supported by a clear infrastructure of Risk Management Frameworks, clear procedures, models and tools. The creation and development of joint Adult and Children's Safeguarding teams/Unit allows opportunities to consider how best to identify opportunities for "joined up" work and models of working together prior to the revised All Wales guidance for both Vulnerable Children and Adults.

5. Safe Services

Whilst there has been an established approach to contract monitoring in commissioned services for some time, this is no doubt where future understanding of how we scrutinise and Quality Assure commissioned service's will develop most. There are internal and regional developments beginning to build on a framework of monitoring and compliance. The new Volunteer's Policy currently going through Scrutiny will also need a clear plan of implementation.

Member Scrutiny:

The Chair remarked that he attended safeguarding training when he started as a county councillor which was not been well attended and asked if there were still members and officers requiring training. It was responded that there is an identified need to provide more training. Basic safeguarding awareness is due to be added to The Hub to be available to all, and additional sessions will be arranged e.g. before a Council meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health expressed concern about keeping records of completed safeguarding training. The need to arrange Corporate Parent training for elected members was also highlighted, again preceding a Council Meeting to optimise attendance.

It was a recommendation of the Select Committee that both safeguarding and corporate parent training is provided.

A member questioned how a record is made when an officer or elected member completes the proposed training on The Hub. It was responded that we are currently dependent on teams reporting on completion of training or attendance at training events via spreadsheets which feed through to whole authority reports. For volunteers there are systems in place to record training information. In the future, Resourcelink and MyView systems will be used to better record officers' training. For Members, there is reliance on Democratic Services' attendance lists and upon Group Leaders.

A question was asked about the 'one size fits all' approach which does not always work well in schools and can be a barrier to volunteering quoting the check list that requires a stay-at-home parent to provide two references. It was responded that a volunteering policy is proceeding that provides a balanced approach to safeguarding in accordance with the statutory guidance Keeping Learners Safe.

The importance of having the common understanding was emphasised whilst working in way to understand e.g. one-off volunteering opportunities against volunteers who have more routine contact with children and the opportunity to form trusting relationships. The priority remains to

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undertake recruitment in a way to keep learners safe and much discussion with Schools, Headteachers, Safeguarding Leads and Governors to make sure that they are supported, and understand when they need to follow full safe recruitment process.

The Chair referred to increasing numbers of the elderly and people with dementia and asked if the same rigour was applied to the safeguarding needs for that group. It was confirmed that legislation exists for adults at risk e.g. duty of people to report concerns. The Standards equally apply to children and young people and the elderly. Members of the Adults Select Committee were invited to attend the meeting today to acknowledge this point.

Committee Conclusions:

The Select Committee scrutinised the Safeguarding Evaluative Report which looked at the progress of Monmouthshire's key safeguarding priorities using identified measures to highlight progress, identify risks and confirm the direction of travel for improvements and further development.

The Committee Chair acknowledged that this is work in progress and requested that the Select Committee sees the finished version, including a self-evaluation judgement, when it is available.

The committee made the following recommendations:

- Given that a number of Members have not completed safeguarding training, it was recommended that a session for Members is arranged (preferably prior to a Council Meeting), and additionally safeguarding awareness training information is made available on the Hub suitable for Members and Officers, to ensure that their safeguarding responsibilities are accommodated.
- That Corporate Parenting training is provided (preferably prior to a Council Meeting) to consolidate Members' knowledge.

The Select Committee wished to acknowledge the amount of work undertaken and thanked those professional members of staff involved.

7. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting as 7th December 2017

The meeting ended at 11.10 am

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