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## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 7th July, 2016 at 2.00 pm

**PRESENT:** County Councillor P. Jones (Chairman)  
County Councillor P. Farley (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: M Fowler (Parent Governor Representative),  
A. Easson, G. Burrows and V. Smith

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Andrew Evans	Senior Management Accountant
Mark Howcroft	Assistant Head of Finance
Richard Jones	Improvement Support Officer
Sharon Randall-Smith	Head of Achievement and Attainment
Jane Rodgers	Safeguarding Service Manager
Tyrone Stokes	Accountant
Nikki Wellington	Finance Manager
Craig Williams	Lead Commissioner Service Development

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

We received apologies from County Councillors R. Harris, L. Guppy, D. Jones, M. Powell P. Clarke and Mr Keith Plow.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

County Councillor P. Farley declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a Governor at The Dell Primary School & Chepstow Comprehensive.

#### **3. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting**

We confirmed and signed the minutes of the Children and Young People's Select Committee meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

#### **4. Children's Services Improvement Journey - To report key changes in Children's Services via the following reports:**

##### **4.1. Children's Services Improvement Programme**

##### **Context:**

To provide members of CYP Select Committee with an appraisal of current issues and key challenges within Children's Services. To appraise members of a proposal for a service improvement programme which addresses these challenges. The report is for members to receive and scrutinise the information concerning key challenges within the service and the proposed service improvement programme.

##### **Key Issues:**

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The primary aim of Children's Service is to work together with others to ensure that Monmouthshire's children and young people reach their full potential and live free from the harmful effects of abuse and neglect. We aim to provide responsive, family orientated services which ensure that our most vulnerable children are effectively safeguarded.

Over the last year, Monmouthshire Children's Services has continued to deliver services in an increasingly challenging and complex context. The work plan for the service from April 2015 - March 2016 was extensive and required the whole service to pull together in developing systems and processes; improving practice and building partnerships.

There remains much to be done and in some areas we are not as far along our path to improvement as others. These areas include:

- Continued increase in our Looked After Children population
- Continued significant budgetary pressure
- Achieving a confident, competent and stable workforce
- Ensuring vulnerable families have access to the right services at the right time, recognising a deficit in family support services - Implementing intelligent commissioning including families first and core funding.
- To articulate our service model and ensure that our model, operating procedures and pathways of care are clear, embedded in practice and widely communicated.
- Continued development of our partnership working
- Embedding a consistent quality assurance framework for the service that drives continuous self-assessment, analysis and improvement.

Addressing these challenges will require a programme approach which captures the interrelatedness of many of the areas for development. This will require the commitment of the whole service together with on-going support from the council. Additional capacity through the commissioning of outside expertise, as well as continued collaboration activity with partners and maximising the use of regional and national support will be of benefit.

#### Member Scrutiny:

Members expressed how impressed they were with the report and how encouraging they found it as it was long recognised that a change was needed in Children's Services.

Members impressed upon the Officers how important it was to be out in the heart of the community with whole place support and welcomed the change of culture.

It was asked why Officers decide to work with IPC and it was explained that the Institute of Public Care were chosen due their wealth of experience and their research based approach, they also provided Officers with instances of best practice and examples of how other authorities have tackled issues.

A Member said that after reading the report it was obvious Officers had acknowledged issues and were trying to rectify problems but the concern was raised that these issues had been acknowledged before and it was asked how Officers will ensure things actually change on this occasion. It was answered that Officers also felt this frustration previously and that now the

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service had been stripped back to basics with a forensic approach. Staff had been asked their opinions, external help had been sought and this has led to a brand new strategy being in place,

It was asked after seeing Social Services go through a cultural change, what did staff think and we were told that staff had been unhappy, but were now engaged and listened to which led to improved teamwork.

#### **Committee's Conclusion:**

The Chair thanked the Officers for bring the report to the Committee and appreciate that this was the start of a long journey.

It was appreciated that there will be teething problems with staff and budgets, akin to Adults Services but it was a positive move forward.

The Committee look forward to receiving a review in 12 months' time.

#### **4.2. Workforce and Practice Development Plan**

##### **Context:**

To consider and endorse the approach contained within the Workforce and Practice Development Action Plan.

##### **Key Issues:**

This plan forms part of the overarching transformation programme for Children's Services.

It has been designed to deliver the cultural and practice change necessary to realise the benefits from the legislative framework in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2015).

This plan sets out how we intend to further shape the workforce within Children's Services. It is our mechanism for ensuring that we have the right people in the right places with the appropriate skills to deliver the aim of the Service which is to ensure that Monmouthshire's children and young people reach their full potential and live free from harmful effects of abuse and neglect.

The Workforce Plan has interrelated components; the diagram below illustrates these. This plan will be managed as a work stream that reports into the overall programme. This also supports our path to improvement. These areas include:

- Continued significant budgetary pressure
- Achieving a confident, competent and stable workforce
- By complimenting the service model and ensuring that our model, operating procedures and pathways of care are clear, embedded in practice and widely communicated.

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Addressing these challenges will require a programme approach which captures the interrelatedness of many of the areas for development. This will require the commitment of the whole service together with on-going support from the council.

#### Member Scrutiny:

Members were concerned that the report made no reference to Unions and we were reassured that Officers had been working closely with the Unions and regarded them as a key component.

It was asked if Officers felt it was important to 'grow our own'; and we were told that this was felt to be essential. Currently a skills audit was being carried out and all staff were being asked about their future goals and aspirations in an attempt to help develop their careers and training needs.

#### **Committee's Conclusion:**

The Chair felt that this was a positive report which reflected the need to get the right people in the right places. It also heightened the need to develop a confident, competent and stable workforce which is fully supported by the Committee.

The report identifies the key challenges and the changes being addressed.

We look forward to receiving a review in 12 months' time.

#### **4.3. Commissioning Strategy: 'Where I am Safe?' ~ A Strategy for Children, Young People and their Families**

##### Context:

To consider and endorse the Strategy for Children, Young People and their Families.

##### Key Issues:

The Strategy for Children, Young People and their Families sets out the strategic intentions in respect of Children, Young People and their Families who require care and support by Monmouthshire County Council.

Specifically, it seeks the Children and Young People Select Committee's support to:

1. Endorse the Children, Young People Strategy which aims to keep children and young people safe by preventing need from escalating, responding appropriately to disadvantage and safeguarding concerns, and maintaining a focus on identifying the most appropriate placement setting;
2. Develop and resource prevention and early intervention services to reduce need from escalating, and to support children and families out of statutory services;
3. Review the range of family support services Monmouthshire provides at all tiers of intervention to ensure that where possible children remain in their families and where they are in care that they can be effectively reunified;
4. Strengthen our approach to practice and quality assurance by learning and implementing change from the findings from quality assurance exercises;

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5. Strengthen our collection, validation and presentation of high quality information and intelligence that gives insight into how effective the system as a whole is at protecting and supporting vulnerable children, as well as helping to change and improve practice;
6. Strengthen the procedures for admission to care;
7. Improve the opportunities for children and young people to have permanency outside of the care system by enabling them to be reunified with their birth or extended family where it is safe to do so, or by securing an adoption order or a special guardianship order to live with a permanent family;
8. Expand the availability of placements to meet a wide range of children, in particular placements for teenagers, parent and babies, sibling groups and children with additional / challenging needs;
9. Evaluate the BASE project with the aim of establishing if the model has been effective, and whether it can be expanded to all foster carers, adopters, and special guardians;
10. Ensure placement with parent agreements are updated in line with regulatory requirements and plans are monitored, and where possible that arrangements are made to discharge Care Orders and support families to meet children's needs without the requirement for them to remain looked after.

#### Member Scrutiny:

Members asked about the pilot scheme of 20 foster families working with a clinical physiologist and applauded the support for foster families which has been lacking in the past. It was asked if this would have a positive effect. Officers hope that it will and look forward to seeing the pilot start shortly.

In regard to the historical data regarding Looked After Children, the data shows a recent increase of 34% in Monmouthshire. We were told that the strategy has developed to cover every aspect impacted by Looked After Children with early intervention being paramount in all cases.

In response to questions regarding the projected number of Looked After Children the The Head of Children's Services explained that she didn't necessarily want the number of Looked After Children to go down, the emphasis had to be on the right children to be looked after when they need it for the right amount of time and where possible, living with their families.

A Member commented as children get older it comes more difficult to integrate them.

It was asked how much the department costs and how it compares to other authorities. We were told that 2-3 years ago when officers advised the outturn for the CYP Select Committee we were advised that we were embarking on collecting unit cost & comparative data. This wealth of data allows us to compare ourselves against other 21 other authorities. We also compare CP to LAC ratios.

In regard to residential placements a Committee Member suggested the use Mountain House.

The Cabinet Member explained the nature of the serious issues and complex needs of some of the children and stressed the importance of finding the best solution for those children.

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### **Committee's Conclusion:**

The Chair thanked Officers for the comprehensive, clear report which had raised some important points.

The Committee endorses the strategy and supports all aspects of the improvement journey as a whole. The Committee recognises that MCC have an over representation of children who are subject to care orders and hope this strategy, when evaluated later this year will prove to be effective.

The Committee look forward to reviewing the strategy in a years' time.

### **5. Improvement and Outcome Agreement**

#### **Context:**

To present the end of year data for the Improvement Objectives which are under the remit of the Children and Young People Select Committee:

Improvement Objective 1: We will improve at all key stages of education

To present an evaluation of the progress and impact made over the three years of the Outcome Agreement 2013 -16, for themes which are under the committee's remit:

Outcome Agreement Theme 1: Improving school attainment

Outcome Agreement Theme 3: Poverty and material deprivation

Outcome Agreement Theme 5: Improving early years' experiences

To present the latest performance against wider key national performance indicators that are under the committee's remit.

#### **Key Issues:**

The Outcome Agreement and the Improvement Objectives have a different focus:

### **Improvement Objectives**

Improvement Objectives are set annually by the Council to deliver on priorities. Despite objectives being focused on the long term the specific activities that support them are particularly focussed for the year ahead.

Activity that contributes to the delivery of some objectives cross cuts Select Committee remits and these have also been reported to the other relevant committee(s). Therefore it is suggested members particularly focus their scrutiny on the activity relevant to the committee with consideration of its contribution to the objective as a whole.

Improvement Objectives are scored based on the Council's Self-evaluation framework, as set in the Improvement Plan 2015/17, Table 1, and performance against them is reported in the Stage 2 Improvement Plan published in October each year.

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Improvement Objective 2 “We will safeguard people, whether young or old, while reducing peoples dependence on social care” is scrutinised by Adults select committee. This includes two areas that will be of interest to Children and Young people select committee these are;

- delivering the children’s services action plan in response to the latest CSSIW inspection report, the service is currently subject to another inspection by CSSIW and the results of this will be reported by the Chief Officer Social Care & Health when published.
- ensuring that senior leaders have good quality information and analysis to provide assurance that children and young people are being safeguarded, the safeguarding performance reports for 2015/16 have recently been presented to a joint Children and Young people and Adults select committee in June 2016.

#### Member Scrutiny:

The Vice Chair welcomed the new format of the figures in the report and commented how much easier the data was to understand.

It was asked how many children received no education and we were told that in line with Welsh Government figures they were not released.

In regard to Flying Start, a Member of the Committee asked for a geographical break down of the 200 children in the scheme and information on how those children and their families are being supported.

#### Committee’s Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the officers and look forward to receiving the Performance Report in the Autumn.

## **6. Revenue and Capital Outturn report**

#### Context:

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the forecast revenue outturn position of the Authority at the end of reporting period 4 which represents the financial outturn position for the 2015/16 financial year.

This report will also be considered by Select Committees as part of their responsibility to,

- assess whether effective budget monitoring is taking place,
- monitor the extent to which budgets are spent in accordance with agreed budget and policy framework,
- challenge the reasonableness of projected over or underspends, and
- monitor the achievement of predicted efficiency gains or progress in relation to savings proposals.

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#### Recommendation proposed to Cabinet:

That Members consider a net revenue outturn underspend of £676,000, an improvement of £878,000 on quarter 3 outturn predictions.

Members consider a capital outturn spend of £18.3m against a revised budget of £18.8million, after proposed slippage of £43.7 million, resulting in a net underspend of £508k, of which circa £433k is available for recycling onto other projects/priorities which it is recommended will be held pending review of the additional pressures.

Consider and approve the £43.7m capital slippage recommended, paying attention to those schemes included in paragraph 3.5.4 where slippage has been requested by the service manager but is not being recommended to slip (£170k), and notes the significant level of slippage required at outturn not manifest earlier in the year highlighting a concern in managers capital forecasting going forward.

Considers the use of reserves proposed and notes the significant decline on earmarked reserve levels at end of 2015-16 and the likely indication at end of 2016-17.

Approves the reallocation of reserve balances, following the actuarial review of the insurance reserve and review of other small reserve balances, in order to address reserve pressures and the apportionment of general underspend in supplementing reserve levels as follows:

- £1,037 million to Redundancy and Pensions reserve
- £419k to IT reserves
- £350k to Invest to Redesign reserve

Approves the use of the Invest to Redesign reserve during 2016-17 totalling £30,835 as MCC's additional contribution to enable the work on the City Deal initiative to continue.

#### Member Scrutiny:

The Chair asked the Officers to write a brief paper on unit costs and send onto the Scrutiny Manager to forward onto the Members of the Committee who will provide feedback.

It was asked if school clusters could be manage their own money and Officers commented that some clusters already share resources.

Questions were asked regarding Future Schools slippage and we were told the project board are currently looking for solutions. The Chair advised the Committee that this was on the upcoming Agenda for a Joint E&D and CYP Select Committee meeting.

#### **Committee's Conclusion:**

Officers were thanked for their work and look forward to receiving further updates.



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### **7. Cabinet & Council Forward Planner**

Members considered the Cabinet & Council Forward Work Planner – no issues were identified as requiring pre-decision scrutiny.

### **8. CYP Forward Work Planner**

Members discussed the Work Programme for the CYP Select Committee. In doing so, the following points were noted:

#### **September Meeting – Integrated Youth Offer**

This item may not be ready for the early September meeting and the Chair was happy to postpone the meeting until the report was complete.

### **9. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting**

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September at 10am

**The meeting ended at 4.02 pm**

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