

# **Decisions of the Children, Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee**

18 September 2017

Members Present:-

Councillor Reuben Thompstone (Chairman)

Councillor Bridget Perry (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Councillor Alison Cornelius

Councillor Helena Hart

Councillor Nagus Narenthira

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Councillor Anne Hutton

Councillor Stephen Sowerby (Substitute)

Also in attendance

Denis Carey (Co-Opted Member)

Marilyn Nathan (Co-Opted Member)

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Val Duschinsky

The Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Reuben Thompstone opened the meeting and welcomed Frankie Sulke DfE Commissioner, the Chief Executive and all other attendees.

## **1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

Councillor Hutton confirmed that her declaration of interest should read "West Locality Advisory Board" and "Barnfield Children's Centre".

**Subject to the above amendment it was RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee on 18 July 2017 be agreed as a correct record.**

## **2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Val Duschinsky who was substituted by Councillor Stephen Sowerby
- Gladys Vendy – Co-opted Member

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

Councillor Anne Hutton declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Agenda Items 7-10 by virtue of being a Trustee of the Barnet Carers Centre and on the Board of the West Locality Board.

## **4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)**

None.

## **5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)**

The Committee noted the responses to the Public Questions which were published and circulated prior to the meeting. The questioner was not present to ask any supplementary question.

## **6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)**

There were none.

## **7. UPDATE REPORT ON THE OFSTED IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS**

The Chairman introduced the item and asked Mr Chris Munday, Strategic Director of Children and Young People and Ms Brigitte Jordaan, Operational Director Corporate Parenting to present the report.

The Committee noted the presentation delivered by Mr Munday. Mr Munday briefed the Committee about the workstreams as part of the Improvement Plan.

It was noted that since the Ofsted inspection, significant work has been underway which includes the appointment of an improvement partner and independent chair of the improvement board, personnel changes and engagement with partners and improvements in the MASH (multi agency safeguarding hub).

Mr Munday informed the Committee about the five themes which underpin the development of the improvement plan in order to drive sustainable improvement as (1) Leadership, governance, partnership (2) Practice leadership (3) Thresholds (4) Improving assessments and (5) Improving planning to ensure decision making is child centred.

He also noted that Essex County Council have been commissioned to review the audit approach for accuracy and consistency. In addition, Essex have been commissioned to check the MASH arrangements and review the child protection conference chair and independent reviewing officer functions.

In relation to the process for measuring improvements, Mr Munday informed the Committee about the need to use both quantitative and qualitative information. The Committee also heard about the need to avoid setting targets which undermine the audit approach, to keep a consistent approach and review additional management capacity.

The Chief Executive, Mr John Hooton underlined the importance of ensuring that responsibility for improvements are shared across all Council services and partner organisations. This included services aimed at improving employment opportunities, community safety and the relationship between adults social care and children's services. He emphasised that the improvements were the top priority of the Council.

The Chairman welcomed the Department for Education Commissioner, Ms Frankie Sulke to the table. Ms Sulke spoke about her role. The Committee noted that Ms Sulke has been appointed to assess whether the Council has the capacity and capability to turn the service around to ensure sustained improvements at pace or whether the services should be taken outside of Council control.

Ms Sulke spoke about her role in terms of understanding the reasons for the finding of the Ofsted inspection, the barriers for improvements and how best to remove them.

She noted that following her findings, the DfE will review the evidence provided and consider whether alternative delivery arrangements are necessary for Children's Services in Barnet.

Ms Sulke informed the Committee about the various stages of the process and noted that her report will be published in the public domain by the end of November.

In light of the recommendations from the inspection, the Committee enquired about improving core social work skills. Mr Munday spoke about plans underway to implement a cultural change and training of social workers and other staff.

Ms Jordaan highlighted the need to increase understanding around conducting and recording purposeful home visits to children and young people. As part of this improvement work, Ms Jordaan noted the importance of reviewing the role that both team managers and social workers play.

The Committee heard about the workstreams to review feedback, quality assessments and equip team managers and social workers with all relevant tools and skills. This, in turn would help improve the quality of visits and case notes made during the visits.

A question was raised by the Committee about the methodology for measuring performance and how value can be added to the work that is underway.

Mr Munday informed the Committee about the quantitative and qualitative indicators which are being scrutinised regularly. The Committee heard that to gain a better understanding of the current status and direction of travel, additional specific indicators are being developed to supplement the qualitative data.

In response to a query about funding and capacity, Mr Munday noted the need to ensure that investments are made at the right level and focused on getting the right improvements particularly in light of the change in demographics and demand for social services.

In support of the need for a cultural change among staff, Ms Jordaan spoke about the recently launched recruitment campaign to encourage applications. She also noted the need for a wider joined approach to implement systematic improvements.

Ms Sulke underlined the importance of being clear about what the problem is and whether processes are getting in the way. She suggested that some quantitative indicators, such as number of IRO escalations can work.

The Committee asked about the challenges regarding recruitment. Mr Munday explained the aim of working towards getting the right capacity and capability within the service. The review of processes has been led by intelligence and feedback received. In addition, the Committee heard about the priorities around reviewing processes, recruiting high quality staff and driving improvements across the organisation.

Following a query from the Committee about the induction process, Mr Munday provided an update on the development of the induction and training programme based on models

of practice. He noted that this process is supported by staff to ensure that sustained improvements are embedded in line with the themes of the Improvement Plan.

The Committee heard about plans to support Members with training in scrutiny of performance of services in line with best practice approaches adopted by other Authorities. Ms Sulke highlighted the importance of in-depth training for Members in order to support the principles of the Improvement Plan and its activities.

In respect of the core functions of social workers, the Committee heard about plans to support social workers in their role to focus on their core functions. The Committee heard about the role of practice development managers and the need to focus on staff morale and the accessibility of senior managers.

The Committee enquired about the management of IT systems within the service. Mr Munday briefed the Committee about improvements to the CSC system and testing of the MASH system and that there had been a focus on bringing all records together.

The Committee asked how it would know what good looked like and Mr Munday responded confirming that this would be when there is consistently good practice, when audits are consistently good and ensuring good quality care planning. Also there needs to be a focus on the child's lived experience and both children and partners should be telling the council that services are good and families should be achieving better. The Council will review the effectiveness of its improvement plan and Ofsted will be reviewing progress at key intervals. Some improvements will be immediate, but others will take more time.

Following a comment from the Committee about the progress of the Improvement Plan, Mr Munday noted that the Committee will be updated as to the anticipated outcomes of the Improvement Plan at various stages.

In response to a query about Children Missing from Home and Care it was noted that the Missing Children tracker and Strategic Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) is providing increased oversight. Mr Munday also noted the development of the improved weekly tracker and that an update will be provided to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.

The Committee referred to section 2.1.4 of the draft financial policy for care leavers the Committee asked for an update on the current restriction to accessing the fund up to twice a year.

In respect of the percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in EET (CYP 7) the Committee requested that the target of 55% be reviewed.

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their contribution to the discussion.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED**:

- 1. That the Committee noted the Commissioner for Children's Services appointment for an initial three-month period following the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF) judgement of inadequate as set out in paragraphs 1.4 to 1.6.**

2. That the Committee noted the actions that have been taken to respond to recommendations within the Ofsted report as set out in paragraphs 1.20 to 1.31.
3. That the committee noted and scrutinised the performance information provided in paragraph 1.32 to 1.63 and Appendix 3.
4. That the Committee agreed the draft Finance Policy for Care Leavers set out in Appendix 1 and delegated to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People authorisation to agree minor amendments and approve the final version of the policy.
5. That the Committee agreed Barnet's draft Joint Housing and Children's Social Care Protocol for homeless 16 and 17 year olds included in Appendix 2, and delegate to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People for authorisation to agree further expansions to reflect best practice and feedback at the next CELS committee.
6. That the Committee agreed the draft Private Fostering poster set out in Appendix 4.

## **8. PLANNING FOR NEW SCHOOL PLACES 2018/19 TO 2022/23**

The Chairman welcomed the report and invited the Programme Director for Education and Learning, Ms Val White to present the report. Ms White briefed the Committee about the content of the paper and the opportunity to expand on the number of school places. The Committee raised concerns about school planning being taken out of the Council's control and the need to ensure that schools are in the right location to meet demand. Ms White confirmed that there was growth in the East and West of the Borough and the Council had a statutory duty to ensure provision of sufficient places.

### **RESOLVED that:**

1. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee noted the projected future requirements for school places up to 2022/23.
2. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee noted the progress in delivering new primary, secondary and special school places to date.
3. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee noted the school expansions that are underway and the free school proposals that are in development as part of the government's free school programme that will contribute to meeting future need.

## **9. SCHOOL MEAL PRICE FOR SEPTEMBER 2017/2018**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee agreed to maintain the price of a school meal offered by the council's contracted school meal provider at its current level for the academic year 2017/18 at a maximum cost to the council of £282,000

## **10. EARLY YEARS PERFORMANCE REPORT - PROGRESS UPDATE**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the progress of the Early Years' service performance 2016/17.

**11. CHILDREN, EDUCATION, LIBRARIES & SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted the standing item on the agenda which lists the reports due to forthcoming meetings during 2017-18. The Committee agreed to receive the Ofsted Improvement Action Plan as a standing item on the agenda at future Committee meetings. (**Action:** Forward Work Programme)

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the items on the Forward Work Programme for 2017-2018 as amended during this meeting.

**12. ANY ITEM(S) THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

None.

The meeting finished at 10.00 pm