

# Decisions of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee

12 September 2018

Members Present:-

Councillor David Longstaff (Chairman)  
Councillor Rohit Grover (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb	Councillor Linda Freedman
Councillor Alison Cornelius	Councillor Anne Hutton
Councillor Val Duschinsky	Councillor Nagus Narenthira
Councillor Anne Clarke	Councillor Felix Byers
Councillor Reuben Thompstone	

## 1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Chairman of the Committee, Councillor David Longstaff, welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

A Member requested that the minutes of the last meeting be changed to note that the Work Programme section should state the Committee's new name "Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee Forward Work Plan"

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting dated 6 June 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

## 2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

None.

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

None.

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

None.

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

None.

## 6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

**7. UPDATE REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF BARNET CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN AND OTHER CES COMMITTEE PRIORITIES, INCLUDING QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT UPDATES FOR Q1 2018-19**

The Chairman introduced the report and invited the Strategic Director for Children and Young People, Chris Munday, to present the report. The Committee received:

- The Statutory Direction issued to Barnet Council in June 2018
- OFSTED Monitoring Visit Letter – August 2018
- Family Services Performance Report

Mr. Munday referred to Appendix 2 of the report - the OFSTED Monitoring Visit Letter, which set out the latest findings from the visit, undertaken in July and August. Mr. Munday noted that the report showed ongoing improvement in relation to looked after children. He further noted that he was pleased to see that Quality Assurance was still a strength.

Mr. Munday advised that there was further work to do in ensuring consistency in the quality of assessments of children in care, and noted that this would be a major focus for the next three months. He further noted that a range of issues were being considered on visits and that the progress being made was encouraging. He advised the Committee that no dates had been set for future monitoring visits, and that the Council was looking to see if further visits would take place. The Committee noted that under the new framework, the Council would have an “Annual Conversation Meeting” which would progress from October. Mr. Munday informed the Committee that the Council was continuing to take action to strengthen services across the board.

A Member referred to section 1.15 of the report, which noted that the challenge of Independent Reviewing Officers could be inconsistent and not always effective in achieving improved practice. The Member questioned where the weakness lay. Mr. Munday informed the Committee that the challenge was inconsistencies in individual pieces of work. He stressed the importance of with being clear with both new and existing members of staff of the changes that were being made, and the need to reinforce what good looks like. He highlighted the importance of Team Managers not signing off poor plans or assessments, so that poor work is unable to progress through the system. Mr. Munday further noted that the Council was undertaking a piece of work with Essex County Council to increase the ability of this group of staff to challenge.

Responding to a question from a Member, Mr. Munday informed the Committee that Barnet had an extremely diverse social worker workforce. He also noted that Barnet was able to access provision from outside where necessary to ensure that any cultural issues were understood. He noted that social workers in London were particularly used to working with diversity, and that a result of that, would not necessarily write such points down despite them being considered. He stressed the importance of changing language or approaches in the context of social work.

A Member questioned when the Authority could expect to be out of the “Inadequate” marker, and asked if this could happen at the Annual Conversation that would take place in October 2018. Mr. Munday advised that four good Monitoring Visits had taken place, and that OFSTED were trying to change the arrangements for visits. He noted that the visits had been helpful and that the Council knew what was needed. He advised that he was anticipating the possibility of further visits in November and February, and noted it

was understood that Local Authorities rated as Inadequate would be subject to a Single Inspection Framework, which would last approximately four weeks.

A Member commented that all Members want to move from an “Inadequate” rating to a “Good” rating, and noted that the most important point was retaining a rigorous focus on the improvement plan. The Member expressed the need to keep receiving the OFSTED update reports because the most important thing is to make improvements for children in the Borough. Mr. Munday advised that the Council was absolutely focussed on improvements for children.

Mr. Munday noted that the rate of knife crime in the Borough had dropped and advised that work with the Police was ongoing and assisting in overall levels of knife crime. He advised that whilst knife crime remains low in comparison to other neighbouring boroughs, this was a critical piece of work.

A Member referred to the FS021 Base budget pressure had a residual risk score of 16, increased from 6. Mr. Munday noted that the Council was managing the risks within the budget.

Following the consideration of the report, the Chairman moved to the recommendations as set out in the report. It was unanimously RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Committee note the progress of the Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan as set out in paragraphs 1.4 to 1.58.**
- 2. That the Committee note the content of the Secretary of State's third direction to Barnet Council outlined in paragraphs 1.21-1.22 and included in Appendix 1.**
- 3. That the Committee note details of Ofsted's monitoring visit set out in paragraphs 1.11 to 1.18 and the monitoring visit feedback letter received from Ofsted attached in Appendix 2.**
- 4. That the Committee note and scrutinise the performance information provided in Appendix 3.**
- 5. The Committee is asked to review the budget, activity, performance and risk information in relation to Children, Education and Safeguarding.**

## **8. REPORT ON TACKLING LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Chairman introduced the report, which outlined the work being undertaken to tackle loneliness and social isolation among children and young people in Barnet.

A Member commented that at the last meeting, the Committee had received a Member's Item in the name of Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb, and had subsequently resolved to invite an organisation called “exposure” to attend a future meeting of the Committee and report to the Committee what LB of Barnet is doing to tackle loneliness among young people. The Chairman noted that this was requested and agreed and asked that the Governance Service contact “Exposure” and invite them to the next meeting. (Action)

Responding to a question from a Member about what percentage of schools have someone onsite to talk about loneliness, Mr. Munday advised the Committee that a

Government Green Paper had offered Barnet the opportunity to be part of a trailblazer for Mental Health Services in schools. Mr. Munday further noted that the Council was bidding for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Schools, and that if they were successful with the bid, it would be a large investment. Mr. Munday commented that many schools will have mentors, but noted that not all mentors would be Mental Health Practitioners, and advised the wish for these mentors to be qualified.

Mr. Neil Marlow, Assistant Director, Traded Services and Head of School Improvement. Cambridge Education advised the Committee that children with social and emotional Mental Health Services. He further noted that all schools in the Resilient Schools Programme would have a Mental Health First Aider.

Responding to a question from a Member, Brigitte Jordaan, Operational Director, Corporate Parenting and Disability advised that the Independent Visitor Contract had been recommissioned. She noted that the Council was not satisfied with the previous provider and that the new contract had been awarded to Action for Children.

Responding to a question from a Member, Mr. Munday advised the Committee that he believed that Councillors were not able to undertake the role of an Independent Visitor, but undertook to confirm this with the Committee (Action)

Following the consideration of the report, the Committee unanimously RESOLVED:

**To note the work being undertaken to tackle loneliness and social isolation among children and young people in Barnet.**

## **9. PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS PROCESS**

The Chairman introduced the report, which set out a proposed change to the procedure of nominating school governors. The intention of the proposed changes was to improve the selection and appointment process of appropriately skilled Governors. In response to a question by a Member, it was agreed that the panel meeting should take place early in the term to ensure that vacancies were filled quickly.

Councillor Thompstone MOVED the following motion which was SECONDED by Councillor Val Duschinsky:

*That a review of the process of nominations is undertaken in twelve months' time, with twelve months' data.*

The Chairman moved to the vote. Votes were recorded as follows:

For	11
Against	0
Abstentions	0

The motion was CARRIED and became the substantive motion.

The Chairman moved to the vote on the recommendations as set out in the report, and on the substantive motion.

It was unanimously resolved that:

1. That the Committee approves the proposal set out in paragraph 1.3 to change the Local Authority (LA) Governor appointment process.
2. That the Committee agrees to delegate authority to nominate LA Governors to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People, following recommendation made by a panel.
3. That a review of the process of nominations is undertaken in twelve months' time, with twelve months' data.

**10. CHILDREN, EDUCATION & SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme, as set out in the report.

Mr. Munday informed the Committee that they would receive the following reports:

- Business Planning – at the November Meeting
- Regional Adoption Agency Programme – January 2019 Meeting

**RESOLVED that the Committee note the Forward Work Programme.**

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

There were none.

The meeting finished at 7:55 pm.