

Decisions of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee

1 July 2019

Members Present:-

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

Councillor Julian Teare	Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb
Councillor Linda Freedman	Councillor Anne Hutton
Councillor Nizza Fluss	Councillor Anne Clarke
Councillor Reuben Thompstone	Councillor Saira Don (Substitute)
	Councillor Kathy Levine (Substitute)

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Val Duschinsky Councillor Nagus Narendhira

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Chairman of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee Councillor David Longstaff, welcomed all attendees, including Councillor Nizza Fluss and Councillor Julian Teare to the membership of the Committee. He also thanked Councillor Felix Byers for all his work as a Member of the Committee during the last municipal year.

The Chairman reminded Members of the Committee that the meeting will be audio recorded and conducted as a paper-light meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 8th May 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Nagus Narendhira who was substituted by Councillor Kathy Levine
- Councillor Val Duschinsky who was substituted by Councillor Saira Don

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 were received.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were none.

7. OFSTED REPORT

The Executive Director for Children and Young People, Chris Munday presented the key points of the report to the Committee.

In 2017, the Council's Children's Services were found to be inadequate –following which, the Council worked collectively with the partnership to drive the improvements needed. As a result of the recent ILACS inspection which took place during May 2019, Ofsted judged Barnet to be good across the four inspection domains:

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
- The experience and progress of children in care and care leavers
- Overall effectiveness

Mr Munday informed that Ofsted noted that, in summary, leaders and managers have made purposeful progress, at pace, to establish a child-focused service that is delivering good outcomes. In relation to leadership, it was noted that there is determination to strive constantly for improvement and their openness to learning have driven change at pace.

In respect of Help & Protection, the Committee heard that strong partnerships have led to an effective and well-integrated early help service and that partnership working is strong across the hub. The Committee also noted that children who need help and protection now receive help and support that is timely and of good quality. Assessments and plans show careful consideration of the views of children and their families.

The Committee heard that MASH provide timely and effective responses and that strategy discussions are timely, child focused, good consideration of historical factors. Decision making is clear and appropriate

Speaking on assessments, Mr Munday noted that these are timely, comprehensive and of good quality providing succinct evidence of risks and clear analysis. In addition, children in private fostering arrangements are safeguarded effectively and disabled children benefit from strong service provision.

In relation to Children in Care, Mr Munday highlighted the feedback that Social workers know their children well and genuinely care about them. Social workers respond well to children who are vulnerable to exploitation. For Care Leavers, it was noted that the majority are either in Education, Employment or Training and there is a positive level of support.

The Committee noted the positive outcome thanks to all staff and Mr Munday highlighted the need to continue to focus on improvements and the importance of placing children and young people at the centre of their work.

The Committee noted the 4 recommendations going forward for Children's Services, namely:

- The incorporation of actions from the vulnerable adolescents at risk panel (VARP) and exploitation strategy meetings into child in need and child protection plans.

- The updating of assessments of need when circumstances change for children in care.
- The incorporation of outcomes from multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) into child in need and child protection plans.
- The promotion of advocacy support for children in care.

The Committee collectively thanked Mr Munday, the management team and all staff in Children's Services and across other service areas involved with the improvement work and commended their efforts.

Following a query about continued supervision and ensuring continued support from Members, Mr Munday noted that briefings will continue to be disseminated to Members on a regular basis to keep Members informed. In addition, case load management will continue to remain a focus in order to monitor that it is manageable.

In respect of supervision, it was noted that the training and support programme for social workers is reviewed and updated. Under the ILACS frameworks, it was noted that the next Children's Services Inspection will take place in three's years' time.

A Member queried about the improvement journey from a Good rating to an Outstanding. Mr Munday informed the Committee that this requires a proven track record of consistently good to better work and innovative work whereby assessments and plans are high quality on a consistent basis. He also explained that, in addition, to carrying out services well, innovative improvements are needed alongside good development and support for staff which will help towards staff recruitment and retention.

The Committee highlighted the importance of continued collaboration between the various departments in Children's Services and to ensure that staff are collectively working towards implementing improvements. Members noted the range of different approaches which are put in place to continue improvements – central to this approach is putting children and young people at the centre and the highest context of all work.

Committee Members noted how a robust audit programme can support continued improvements through imbedding and implementing the recommendations. Members will continue to be updated via regular briefings on audit findings.

The Committee enquired how Corporate Parenting principles are embedded across the organisation in an effective way. Mr Munday highlighted that the principles will continue to be embedded across a range of services including housing and any work involving our partners in order to continue to strengthen partnership working and drive improvements forward.

In response to a query about a forward plan and receiving regular performance data, Mr Munday noted that an action plan has been developed to ensure regular reporting of performance information and agency staffing. In addition, following the Office move, any overarching risks will be processed and monitored around potential fragmentation in respect of staff working at different locations.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for the questions, scrutiny and discussions. The Chairman paid special thanks to Mr Munday, Tina McElligott and Brigitte Jordaan and commended the work of all staff across the organisation as well as all partners and highlighted the importance of continued partnership working.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Committee:

1. Considered and noted the inspection findings as set out within Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.
 2. Referred the report to Full Council for consideration.
8. **ANY OTHER ITEM(S) THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT (IF ANY)**

None.

The meeting finished at 8.20 pm