

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 DECEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson),
Councillors De'Ath, Taylor, Singh and Burrage

Co-opted Members: Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic representative),
Carol Cobert (Church in Wales representative) and Karen Dell'Armi
(Parent Governor Representative)

Chloe Burrage (Cardiff Youth Council)

The Chairperson welcomed Liz Barry, Her Majesty's Inspector of Education and Training in Wales to the meeting as an observer. The Committee congratulated Chloe Burrage on her recent appointment as a Corporate Apprentice in the Youth Service and thanked her for her views, questions and commitment to the Committee as she is no longer able to represent the Youth Council on the Committee.

The Chairperson and Committee Members paid tribute to Councillor Jim Murphy who sadly passed away on 1 December 2018.

46 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Hill-John, Joyce, Morgan and Phillips and Rebecca Crump.

47 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bridgeman declared a personal interest in item 7 having expressed an opinion as part of the consultation.

48 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the 13 November were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

49 : VALE, VALLEYS AND CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE - ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member, Children and Families), Angela Harris (Regional Adoption Manager), Claire Marchant (Director Social Services and Deborah Driffield (Assistant Director Children's Services) to the meeting.

Angela Harris presented the report, and advised Members that this was the third annual report and covers the period between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. A Best Value Review was commissioned and reported on. Members noted that most of the actions arising from the recommendations have been completed, although there are still some outstanding. As far as the recommendations as a result of the review, The range of measures report on has increased each year which has required more comprehensive recording.

Members were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the report. Those discussions were summarised as follows:

- Members noted the slightly unusual geographical footprint of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative, particularly as it was now based in Barry. It was the largest of the five regional collaboratives but further information could be provided outlining the reason for the footprint of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff region.
- Members sought further information about the Marketing & Recruitment Co-ordinator post and were advised that the post was created to help track and harness the enquires with a view to increasing the number converted into application. Members were concerned to note that it was a fixed term contract, but that progress was already being made in both the professional and timely manner in which they are being dealt with. It is important however to ensure that the process, once an initial enquiry has been made, is thorough.
- Members referred to the frustration outlined by both financial and staffing issues when the previous report was presented and queried whether there has been improvement in those issues. The Manager advised that the Best Practice Review was commissioned as a result of work undertaken to consider the capacity of the service; resource did not meet demand. Members noted that since the review two further Social Worker posts have been created. Whilst there has been a high turnover of staff more recently the additional resource has not been fully appreciated, however, the Adoption Service Team is more stable because of the additional resource and more able to cope with the demand and to reduce waiting lists.

Officers advised that it is vital that capacity is kept under review in terms of both the recruitment of adopters and also adoption support.

- Members queried the flexibility of the training provided to potential adopters and were advised that it is important to attract a wider range of prospective adopters. The training is a 3 day course, but a further one day has been introduced because of the time lapse between the course and the process. It is offered over a weekend period to try and assist working families. There are plans to change the regulations in Wales next year to make it a two stage process, with 2 months for the enquiry, training and checks and then there will be 4 months to allow for the assessment.
- Members asked whether birth parents are becoming more involved in the process and were advised that it remains a challenge both locally and nationally. All children are allocated a family finder who will undertake birth parent counselling, to send anonymised letters and to go to the home of the birth parents. The team will try various different ways to reach out to the parents, who can be quite aggrieved with the process. Often the parents will get in touch with the team once the Court process has been completed.

- Members noted that whilst it has to be accepted that some placements have broken down the figure is relatively low, it is relatively low nationally as well.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Angela Harris (Regional Adoption Manager) on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations outlined during the way forward discussion.

50 : CHILDREN'S SERVICES QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member, Children and Families), Claire Marchant (Director Social Services and Deborah Driffield (Assistant Director Children's Services) to the meeting.

Members were provided with a presentation, Quarter 2 Performance Report, which outlined the nature of the revised report together with the key pressures and the Directorate response.

Members were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the report. Those discussions were summarised as follows:

- Members discussed the Signs of Safety model which was implemented in Swansea and in Cardiff in early 2016, and noted that going forward there needs to be a change of practice; it is about working with families, taking risks and considering that as family what we can do to support them in their community. It is important there is time to pause and reflect before making a decision to remove children from their families.

Members asked whether the authority has the capacity and resource to take that forward and were advised that a post has been created on a temporary basis with many years of experience who can help with understanding how the model will work, and to be able to work with both staff and families. Whilst the framework is in place, going forward it necessary to ensure that it works correctly.

- Members discussed the consultation on the first draft of the Child Exploitation Strategy and that it had been delayed. Officers advised that it was important that the strategy was widened, it was necessary to include human trafficking, and criminal exploitation as they are all linked. In the spirit of the act both adults and children should be included. Members noted that a working group is now pushing that strategy forward and that all stakeholders are now involved. A draft of that strategy will be available at the beginning of next year.
- Members were keen to be informed of the current thinking around the recruitment and retention of staff. Officers advised that it is important that competition between authorities is stopped. A cap needs to be put in place. The authority is also looking at a number

of other options: forging closer links with universities, so that placements and secondments can be offered; a plan to consider support social workers being seconded onto a Master's degree; protected caseloads for those in their first year of practice and of course it is hoped that the financial offer can be increased. It is accepted that working 'at the front door' is extremely stressful, but if there were more social workers and social work assistants there could be a lowering of the case load.

Members also noted that in adult services newly qualified social workers spend several months in the point of contact service which gives them a good ground before having their own case load and that something similar is being considered Children's Services.

Members noted that whilst the market supplement has been used previously it is important to address the root cause, namely there are not enough people coming into the Social Work but Welsh Government must inject some money into the system.

- Members queried whether the Council's in house agency Cardiff Works could be expanded to cover Social Worker positions. Members were advised that currently it is still a third cheaper to employ directly.
- Members briefly discussed the budgetary pressures and were advised that it is important that money is invested in Children's Services to get the necessary systems in place to ensure good outcomes for all children and young people

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations outlined during the way forward discussion.

51 : OUT OF COUNTY INQUIRY REPORT - CABINET RESPONSE

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member, Children and Families), Claire Marchant (Director Social Services and Deborah Driffield (Assistant Director Children's Services) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Hinchey to make a statement in which he confirmed that out of 19 recommendations outlined in the report, 11 were full recognised, some partially and only one was rejected. The current position is that within the next year there will be 5 residential homes for children. Different types of accommodation is needed, they are small family type homes with 2/3 bedrooms.

Members were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the report. Those discussions were summarised as follows:

- Members noted that there a placement commissioning strategy is being developed which covers the development of an accurate care plan through to ensuring that the service that is commissioned

meets the outcome for the young person rather it fitting into the current provision available. Whilst officers accepted that there is a considerable overspend the majority of which relates to placements, Members were advised that it is important to get the range of services right going forward.

- Members stressed the importance of ensuring that this strength based approach was fully embedded with our partners, for example the Police and the Probation Service and that it should be kept under review.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations outlined during the way forward discussion.

52 : PROVISION OF ENGLISH-MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN THE LLANRUMNEY AREA SOP: PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

Councillor Bridgeman reaffirmed his interest in this item and played no further part in the discussion of this item.

Councillor De'Ath took the Chair for the discussion of this item.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member, Education, Employment & Skills), Janine Nightingale (Head of Schools Organisation, Access & Planning) and Michele Duddridge-Hossain (Operational Manager, Planning & Provision) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry to make a statement in which she indicated that as a result of the consultation a clear majority expressed opposition to the closure of Glan-yr-Afon Primary School; there were strong feelings expressed about the distance to other schools and concerns were raised about children attending a faith school. In the circumstances the recommendation is no longer to close the school but to reduce the intake size of the school and for a further report after exploring modified proposals.

Members were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the presentation. Those discussions were summarised as follows:

- Members noted that there is strong feeling in the area about closing the school, particularly on the basis that the High School has already gone. Members were advised however that there is need to reduce the number of surplus papers in the area and in the circumstances the size of the school will reduced to a single form entry.
- Members asked whether there was a framework in place with looks at the broader implications of closure and amenities being lost in the area. Officers advised a Equalities Impact Assessment has to be carried out and also that as part of any proposal there has to be consideration of the any impact on the community.

- Members noted that, in respect of school places in that area, all options were being considered at the present time.
- Members queried the current position with the budget at Glan yr Afon Primary School bearing in mind the reduction in pupil numbers and were advised that there is a deficit currently but they have avoided carrying a deficit budget.
- Members noted that there are still nursery places available.
- Members sought clarification as to how satisfied officers were about their estimation of pupil numbers in that area, particularly bearing in mind the new housing developments. Officers confirmed they were satisfied with the calculation and the figures. The figures reflect the information we currently have, whilst there has to be flexibility within the figures it is important that there is not a large surplus.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations outlined during the way forward discussion.

53 : SOP 21ST CENTURY (BAND B) - REDEVELOPMENT OF CANTONIAN, WOODLANDS AND RIVERBANK SCHOOLS

Councillor Bridgeman returned to the chair.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member, Education, Employment & Skills), Janine Nightingale (Head of Schools Organisation, Access & Planning) and Michele Duddridge-Hossain (Operational Manager, Planning & Provision) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry to make a statement in which she indicated that Cantonian High School was one of the Band B schemes as a result of the condition of the building and the increased school place requirement in the central area and that the buildings at Riverside and Woodlands were no longer suitable. It is therefore necessary for the consultation to take place to consider rebuilding and expanding Cantonian High School, expanding the Special Resource Base at the site, and relocating both Woodlands Special School and Riverbank Special School to that site.

Members were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the presentation. Those discussions were summarised as follows:

- Members discussed the provisional arrangements for the building of the new schools and were advised that the existing school will remain whilst the new Cantonian High School is built on the site; the new school will be built at the back. The old school would then be demolished.

It was noted that will be a detailed transport plan bearing in mind the number of schools on the site. Officers advised that whilst the

site is referred to as Doyle Avenue, it is on the basis that the site could not be called Cantonian, and the plan will also contain information as to which entrance is best for each school on the site.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations outlined during the way forward discussion.

54 : JOINT COMMITTEE DRAFT DRUG INQUIRY REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Ebrahim, chair of the Inquiry to the meeting.

Councillor Ibrahim indicated that the report is the result of a seven month investigation into the impact drug dealing can have on the life of a young person, their families and the wider community. The report, containing 46 key findings and 19 recommendations, was approved by the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee on the 5 December 2018.

AGREED: Members noted the content of the draft report for submission to the Cabinet.

55 : WORK PROGRAMME

Martyn Hutchings (Principal Scrutiny Officer) introduced the report.

AGREED – That the report be noted and the work programme be published.

56 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

The following item was certified by the Chair as an Urgent Item to enable the Committee to be notified of the publication of the Estyn Inspectors report dated October 2018 in respect of St Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School and agreed a process for future consideration of the report by the Committee.

57 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairman agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

58 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meet is Tuesday 15 January 2019. The meeting is scheduled to take place at Eastern High School.

The meeting terminated at 7.14 pm