

These minutes are draft and are subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to be held on 10 March 2015

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 DECEMBER 2014

Present: Councillor Richard Cook (Chairperson), Councillors Boyle, Chaundy, Gordon, Govier, Murphy, Dianne Rees and Thorne (plus one vacancy).

Co-opted Members: Mrs P.Arlotte (Roman Catholic Representative).

Apologies:

43: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson reminded Members of their responsibility under Part III of the Members' Code of Conduct to declare any interest in general terms and to complete personal interest forms at the start of the meeting and then, prior to the commencement of the discussion of the item in question, specify whether it is a personal or prejudicial interest. If the interest is prejudicial Members would be asked to leave the meeting and if the interest is personal, Members would be invited to stay, speak and vote. The following declarations were made:

<i>Councillor/Co-opted Member</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Interest</i>
<i>Mrs P. Arlotte</i>	<i>4 – Schools Performance Monitoring</i>	<i>Personal – member of governing body of St Bernadette's Primary School</i>
<i>Boyle</i>	<i>4 – Schools Performance Monitoring</i>	<i>Personal – member of governing body of Marlborough and Springwood Primary Schools</i>
<i>Chaundy</i>	<i>4 – Schools Performance Monitoring</i>	<i>Personal – member of governing body of St David's CIW Primary School and St Philip Evans RC Primary School.</i>
<i>Cook</i>	<i>4 – Schools Performance Monitoring</i>	<i>Personal – member of governing body of Radnor and Lansdowne</i>

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Primary Schools

<i>Gordon</i>	<i>4 – Schools Performance Monitoring</i>	<i>Personal – member of governing body of Severn Primary School</i>
<i>Govier</i>	<i>4 – Schools Performance Monitoring</i>	<i>Personal – member of governing body of Treganna and Ninian Primary Schools</i>
<i>Govier</i>	<i>6 – Children’s Services Performance</i>	<i>Personal – (Diverse Cymru Adviser)</i>
<i>Murphy</i>	<i>4 – Schools Performance Monitoring</i>	<i>Personal - member of governing body of Hywel Dda Primary and Herbert Thompson Primary</i>
<i>Thorne</i>	<i>4 – Schools Performance Monitoring</i>	<i>Personal - member of governing body of Grangetown Nursery and Ninian Park Primary School</i>
<i>Dianne Rees</i>	<i>4 – Schools Performance Monitoring</i>	<i>Personal - member of governing body of St Mellons Primary School and Pontprennau Primary School</i>

44: MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 11 November 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

45: SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE MONITORING – SCHOOL INSPECTION – OUTCOMES IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY.

The Chairperson welcomed Nick Batchelar, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning and Angela Kent, School Performance Officer.

The purpose of this report was to enable Members to receive one of a series of reports which focus mainly on the implementation of the Estyn Inspection Action Plan but which also include the Annual Performance of Schools report for the last academic year. The Annual Performance of Cardiff Schools and the Youth Service report is normally considered by this Committee in January and considered by the Council’s Cabinet at a later meeting. The Director of Education

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has however identified certain performance areas within the overall report which are already available to be scrutinised, ahead of the main report. The earlier consideration of these areas would enable the Committee to focus on the issues raised in the following areas:

- Outcomes of inspections for schools inspected in the period September 2010 to December 2014
- Performance in Literacy and Numeracy

The Chairperson invited the Director to make a statement. The Director began by thanking the Committee for agreeing to take this new approach to looking at reports on the performance of schools. In previous reports the balance between data and explanatory narrative has not been right. The practice of looking at the report as a whole has meant that it has been difficult to give it a comprehensive consideration in just one meeting. The new format has made it easier to identify actions that need to be taken. Some performance data is still not available, data, for example, on the performance of particular groups of children, such as Looked After Children (LAC) and children from ethnic groups. Estyn will be returning in the spring of 2015 to look at performance in relation to three of its recommendations, especially Recommendation 3, which is that the local authority should make sure that the arrangements for delivering school improvement services challenge and support schools effectively, in order to improve standards for learners in all key stages.

Angela Kent gave a presentation on outcomes of inspections for schools inspected in the period September 2010 to December 2014, following which the Chairperson invited comments and questions from the Committee.

The Committee asked after what period can the local authority take more drastic measures in relation to schools that are under local authority monitoring but are still failing to improve their performance. The Committee was advised that if a school has been categorised by Estyn as requiring significant improvement or has been placed under special measures, the local authority can act immediately if it so wishes. The categorisation process, done in conjunction with the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service, has been sharper over the last twelve months, especially since September 2014. It is the case that some schools have had concerns over the judgement on their capacity to improve. Letters have been sent by the local authority to several schools, setting out the performance improvements that are expected and the actions that could follow if these improvements were not made. Formal warning notices prepare the ground for formal intervention by the local authority and five such notices have been issued to secondary schools in the last year. Schools that are not performing to their potential have to evidence improvement and are given a formal compliance period in which to do so. If that does not happen then the local authority uses its powers of intervention. Addressing the performance of headteachers is the responsibility of governing bodies, although if they do not do that the local authority does have the power to address this. Formal statements of concern

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have been issued to a significant number of primary schools and these are the precursor to a formal warning notice.

The Committee suggested that information on the actions that are being taken in relation to schools which have been identified as poorly performing schools should be released to the public as there is a danger that people will feel that the local authority is doing nothing about these schools.

The Committee asked what is done to support schools that currently have no headteachers permanently in post and are being run by acting headteachers and was advised that during this time the school would be supported by the Challenge Adviser.

The Committee questioned whether the local authority is really getting to the cause of poor performance by schools. Some of the schools have been under-performing for years. The Committee also asked whether it could, in future, have comparative data on the performance of English schools. The Director cautioned that the data on English schools is based on Ofsted data, and its inspections are different, so if comparisons were made they may not be comparing like with like. Some schools are part of the Schools Challenge Cymru programme. They are monitored monthly, targets are set and progress is measured, all of which provides more robust evidence for local authority intervention, should that become necessary.

The Committee asked whether Estyn's assessments of school performance dovetail with the local authority's own assessments, asked what the situation in Cardiff is in relation to headteacher vacancies and enquired whether enough is being done to attract top quality headteachers to the city. The Committee was advised that the view of a school's performance held by the Challenge Adviser on behalf of the local authority should tally with the judgements of Estyn. If the Challenge Adviser says one thing and the Estyn report says another then something has gone wrong. The Director advised the Committee that the performance of the Challenge Advisers has improved but there is room for further improvement.

If, the Committee asked, the Consortium does not perform as well as is expected, then how long can the local authority continue to tolerate that before doing something about it. The Committee was advised that, on occasion, formal letters have been exchanged between the Director and Hannah Woodhouse. He noted that the Joint Peer Review of Cardiff Council 2013 has said that if the Consortium does not deliver then another solution to poor school performance will have to be found. On the recruitment of headteachers, the Committee was advised that the local authority can encourage the best headteachers to come to work in Cardiff's schools by making the leadership role more inviting, by offering the development of professional skills and through good quality advertising. However, rather than the numbers of applications received, the most important thing is to get good quality people appointed to the vacant posts.

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The Committee asked if anything is done to encourage good practitioners to develop their skills and become school leaders and headteachers. The Committee was advised that school-to-school support offers more opportunities for potential leaders to emerge.

Earlier in the meeting, it had been acknowledged by the Director that at previous meetings the Committee had considered the extent to which teacher assessment could be taken as reliable indicators of performance. Returning to this point the Committee asked whether the standardisation of teacher assessments would improve results. The Committee was advised that there is to be a process of standardisation across this academic year. The first part of this is still going on, but part of it will involve an additional layer of checking, to be carried out by someone from a different local authority. Implementing this process is difficult to do as there are approximately four hundred and twenty schools in the Consortium and one hundred schools in Cardiff.

Angela Kent gave a presentation on performance in literacy and numeracy, after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from the Committee.

The Committee noted that results (from the National Literacy programme and National Numeracy programme reading and numeracy tests) were presented in three bands of standardised scores. "Less than 85" representing pupils with standardised scores more than one standard deviation less than the mean, "Between 85 and 115" representing pupils with standardised scores within one standard deviation either side of the mean and "More than 115" representing pupils with standardised scores more than one standard deviation above the mean. It was suggested that this represents a large range of ability and that when working towards targets there is a risk of aiming to get pupils to the point where they can achieve just over 85 or 115, in order to get them into the next performance band. It was suggested that if children were only just getting over 85 or 115, then this could indicate that there has not been a systemic improvement in performance.

The Committee pointed out that schools are grouped into 'families', and that Cardiff schools can be in a family with schools outside Cardiff. As the Consortium only looks at the performance of the family of schools there is a risk that a school might appear to be performing well because it is being compared with the other schools in the family, none of which are performing well.

The Director advised the Committee that the Committee will receive further reports on particular aspects of school performance, such as school attendance, which is of major importance. New data on this will be released in December 2014 and is likely to show that Cardiff's performance on this has improved again.

The Chairperson thanked the Director and officer for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

AGREED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member highlighting the issues raised during the Way Forward discussion.

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46: REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE – DRAFT CABINET REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sue Lent, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Families, Tony Young, Director of Education and Angela Bourge, Operational Manager Strategy, Commissioning & Resources).

The purpose of this report was to provide the Committee with an opportunity to undertake the pre-decision scrutiny of the draft Cabinet report on the Regional Adoption Service, which is due to be considered by Cabinet on 11 December 2014. Cabinet is to be asked to approve the plan to establish the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative, which will be one of five collaboratives that will form the National Adoption Service (NAS). The Regional Collaborative will be made up of the local authorities for Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Operational Manager gave the Committee a presentation, following which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from the Committee.

The Committee enquired whether the Vale of Glamorgan local authority, which is to act as the host authority, had yet given its approval for the recruitment of a regional adoption manager. The Committee was advised that this approval has now been given and that it will be advertised in January 2015.

The Committee asked whether performance targets had been set for the Regional Adoption Service, as the Committee would need something by which the success of the service could be measured. The Committee was advised that previously Cardiff's performance on adoption has been fed into regional collaborative data, which then goes into data on national performance. Data on the performance of individual local authorities is available for comparison. The aim is to increase the number of adopters and the number of children placed for adoption. The regional option increases the pool of available adopters. The length of time that is taken for adoption assessments to be completed should also be looked at as a performance target.

The Committee suggested that it would be useful to receive a report on the governance of the regional service, as ensuring the welfare and protection of children is a high risk area. The Committee also felt that there are still a lot of uncertainties around the plan. The Committee was advised that this is partly a result of the very constrained timetable that has been set by the Welsh Government.

The Committee asked whether the major charities, such as the Barnardo's Adoption Service, would be involved in the regional service. The Committee was advised that the role of these agencies in the regional arrangements has not yet been finalised. The local authorities will continue to work in partnership with the voluntary agencies.

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There was some concern that the report did not focus enough on what the expected outcomes are. The Committee was advised that in the past Children's Services and the Social Care directorate have been poor at targeting and monitoring services on the basis of outcomes. The new Social Care and Well-being (Wales) Act places more emphasis on that.

The Committee asked what the benefits of the regional service will be and whether a training fund will be available. The Committee was advised that there were a number of benefits to being part of the collaborative; there would be a bigger pool of adopters; the local authorities could collaborate on the recruitment of adopters; the regional service would have a single brand; and the service would mitigate the effect of a postcode lottery. The training budget will be the same as it is now but the local authorities will pool their training budgets. The North Wales adoption consortium has been operational for several years and so the regional service of which Cardiff will be a part will have the advantage of being able to learn from the experience of the North Wales consortium. It has been achieving substantially better outcomes for adopters and for children.

The Chairperson thanked the Deputy Leader and officers for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

AGREED: That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Cabinet Member highlighting the following issues:

Vision and Performance Targets

While Members support the principle of a regional adoption service, they would like the draft report to have made explicit the Council's expectation of the benefits of the collaboration, in terms of specific outputs and overall outcomes.

During questioning, Committee came to understand what the Cabinet Member felt to be the fundamental drivers of entering into this partnership arrangement. Members could view the benefits of collaboration the Cabinet Member set out – such as increasing the pool of potential adopters, improving capacity to brand and promote the service, increase consistency and reduction of the current 'postcode lottery' – as valid reasons for entering into partnership, and would have liked to see these mentioned in the draft report.

In scrutinising a proposal like this, it would also have been helpful to have had some data on the current position, and quantification of the anticipated targets for improvements in service delivery and performance outcomes that would emerge from the collaboration.

Members were pleased to hear that the Cabinet Member will still be able to bring Cardiff-specific data to Committee so that Members can compare

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future outcomes with what is being achieved now, and recognise that arrangements for regional target setting are still developing.

Committee expressed a concern at the way forward that this proposed agreement was a “leap into the unknown”, albeit one predicated on successful outcomes being delivered from earlier adopters such as the North Wales collaboration, which is now one year in.

It would be appreciated if for the future, the Cabinet Member might be able to bring some of this data from North Wales to Committee, for discussion of future performance planning and monitoring arrangements so that suitable indicators can be agreed for Members to scrutinise.

Governance Issues

Members asked a number of questions about the governance of the Regional Service. With so many and such varied partnership arrangements and alternative delivery models currently emerging in the fields of child protection, education and social care, the Committee is concerned at its future capacity to provide overview and scrutiny of these services, and will be grateful if the Cabinet Member’s officers can liaise with Paul Keeping and Martyn Hutchings, and with regional social care and scrutiny colleagues, to develop ideas and options for the future scrutiny arrangements that can be brought back to us. On the basis of this information, the Committee can put plans in place to optimise performance monitoring and future service delivery.

Committee recognises that the concept of regional adoption service delivery and the actual collaborative footprint for this collaboration have been mandated by the Minister, and that the Cabinet Member has not been able to influence this. The same has been the case with the education consortium arrangements. Members are concerned in both instances at what scope for manoeuvre the Council would have, should the regional collaboration arrangements not prove effective. Members do not believe that the Cabinet can currently anticipate or control what the Council’s financial contribution will be in future years, and heard that the partnership agreement is a ‘work in progress’. This will leave the Council with unspecified risks moving into this arrangement, which the Committee will need to scope and quantify so that the Members will be able to effectively scrutinise the proposals.

Other Issues

Committee were interested to hear that the emerging national and regional collaborations were partly seen as a means to support the “Welsh identity” of adopted children, and reduce the number of children adopted far afield in England or Scotland. This would also make it easier for prospective adopters to visit and prepare in advance of the adoption, as travel times would be shorter. Members can see the value of this, but felt overall that

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the most important factor was for a child to be placed in an appropriate and caring family environment, irrespective of the location.

A Member asked why there was not more explicit reference in the draft report and business case to the role of the Third Sector in supporting adoption arrangements, but was reassured to hear the Operational Manager assert that charities would be closely involved in the operational arrangements going forward.

Members were pleased to hear that the Committee might be able to receive an update on the National Adoption Service before too long, and Martyn Hutchings will liaise with the Director to find a suitable time slot for this.

47: CHILDREN'S SERVICES – QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sue Lent, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Families and Tony Young, Director of Education.

The purpose of this report was to set out for the Committee performance data outlining progress against the objectives aligned to the social theme for the quarter ending 30 September 2014.

The Director presented the report. The Committee was advised that paragraphs nine to fourteen of the report gave the highlights of the service area's performance. There have been improvements in performance on the recording of decisions on referrals, on the timeliness of initial and core assessments and on the recording of initial care plans for Looked After Children (LAC). However, performance on the timeliness of initial child protection conferences decreased. This has been the best quarter so far but there is no room for complacency. It is felt that practice within the service is good but that there is some bureaucracy in process that is getting in the way and this needs to be addressed.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from the Committee.

The Committee noted that graphs in the report indicate that after a period of rising numbers of referrals during the past few years, the number of referrals has now started to fall back. This pattern can also be seen in the graphs on initial and core assessments. The Committee asked whether, in light of current economic circumstances, there is now expected to be more pressure on Children's Services and whether the service carries out analysis that allows it to predict patterns, in terms of the types of children that will be referred to the service for specific reasons. The Committee was advised that that kind of analysis is not carried out at present. The children who get referred to the service are predominantly from poorer backgrounds, so if economic circumstances get harder it might be expected that there will be an increase in referrals, but that increase would not come through straightaway.

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There is now more awareness of the need to triangulate the data on hardship and demand for services, which can be done between the local authority and its partners and between Children's Services and, for example, Education.

The Committee returned to the topic of the reduction in the number of referrals, pointing out the drop from 1.169 in Quarter 1 to 969 in Quarter 2. The Director suggested that as there had been a several questions on this he could return to the Committee at a later date and present a report on contacts and referrals, on demand and on the quality of service.

The Director advised the Committee that the situation on recruitment and retention has improved greatly; agency workers want to stay with the service and staff morale is good. The Committee was concerned protracted processes in HR might be causing delays in newly-appointed social workers being able to take up their posts. The Committee was advised that staff are being consulted on this to see if they feel that the current process helps or hinders recruitment. The Director offered to report back to the Committee on this.

The Committee asked how 'weather-proof' the service is, how well it will be able to cope if it does not get as much protection in the forthcoming budget as it has had in previous years. The Committee was advised that the real challenge is that the lead-in time that the service will need in order to prepare for the reduction in resources is not there. Working with partners may help to bring down the numbers of children that need services. There has been an over-spend, due to revisions in the criminal justice system, due to the need for more children to go into residential care and due to more children being placed for adoption, although placing more children for adoption will save the Council money in the long run.

The Chairperson thanked the Deputy Leader and the Director for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

AGREED: That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Cabinet Member highlighting the following issues:

The Committee was pleased to be informed that there have been improvements in performance on the recording of decisions on referrals, on the timeliness of initial and core assessments and on the recording of initial care plans for Looked After Children (LAC). However, performance on the timeliness of initial child protection conferences decreased. It is felt that practice within the service is good but that there is some bureaucracy in process that is getting in the way and this needs to be addressed.

The Committee also expressed some surprise at the reduction in the number of referrals, pointing out the drop from 1.169 in Quarter 1 to 969 in Quarter 2. The Members welcomed the Directors suggested that as there had been a several questions on this he could return to the Committee at a later date and present a report on contacts and referrals, on demand and on the quality of service.

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The Committee asked whether, in light of current economic circumstances, there is now expected to be more pressure on Children's Services and whether the service carries out analysis that allows it to predict patterns, in terms of the types of children that will be referred to the service for specific reasons. The Committee was advised that that kind of analysis is not carried out at present. The children who get referred to the service are predominantly from poorer backgrounds, so if economic circumstances get harder it might be expected that there will be an increase in referrals, but that increase would not come through straightaway. Members considered that this analysis may be helpful for future workforce planning information.

The Director advised the Committee that the situation on recruitment and retention has improved greatly; agency workers want to stay with the service and staff morale is good. The Committee was concerned protracted processes in HR might be causing delays in newly-appointed social workers being able to take up their posts. The Committee was advised that staff are being consulted on this to see if they feel that the current process helps or hinders recruitment. The Committee requested that the Director should provide a further report to the Committee on this issue.

48: CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

This report was for information only.

49: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 13 January 2015 at 2.30pm

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____