

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 JUNE 2018

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson), Councillors Philippa Hill-John, Joyce, Murphy, Phillips, Taylor and Singh

Co-opted Members: Carol Cobert (Church in Wales representative), Rebecca Crump (Parent Governor Representative) and Karen Dell'Armi (Parent Governor Representative)

### 1 : APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Committee noted that Council at its meeting on 24 May 2018 appointed Councillor Lee Bridgeman as Chair and the following Members to the Committee:

Councillors De'Ath, Philippa Hill-John, Joyce, Morgan, Murphy, Phillips, Taylor and Singh.

Co-Optees Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic Representative), Carol Cobert (Church in Wales Representative), Rebecca Crump (Parent Governor Representative), Karen Dell'Armi (Parent Governor Representative).

### 2 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee noted the terms of reference as agreed by Council at its meeting on 24 May 2018.

To scrutinise, measure and actively promote improvement in the Council's performance in the provision of services and compliance with Council policies, aims and objectives in the area of children and young people, including:

- School Improvement
- Schools Organisation
- School Support Services
- Education Welfare & Inclusion
- Early Years Development
- Special Educational Needs
- Governor Services
- Children's Social Services
- Children & Young Peoples Partnership
- Youth Services and Justice
- Play Services

To assess the impact of partnerships with and resources and services provided by external organisations including the Welsh Government, joint local government services, Welsh Government Sponsored Public Bodies and quasi-departmental non-governmental bodies on the effectiveness of Council service delivery.

To report to an appropriate Cabinet or Council meeting on its findings and to make recommendations on measures which may enhance Council performance or service delivery in this area.

### 3 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors De'Ath and Morgan and Patricia Arlotte.

### 4 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

### 5 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

### 6 : CHILDREN'S SERVICES QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member – Children & Families), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People and Communities) and Irfan Alam (Assistant Director, Children's Services) to the meeting and to present the report.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Hinchey to make a statement in which he explained that officers from Children's Services were working to develop a more simplified version of the performance report which meets the needs of Members and enables officers to easily provide the necessary information. He welcomed the Committee's proposal to have a performance panel.

The Corporate Director, People and Communities gave a presentation which provided Members with an outline of the new approach to performance management. She stressed her wish to improve the performance reports and recognised the need for the Committee to receive additional information to fully understand issues in Children's Services.

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

- Members were advised that 15 looked after children were returned to Cardiff during the year, and that there was one further young person to be returned. To ensure that children either remain in Cardiff or are being returned to Cardiff the Task and Finish Inquiry Report detailed a number of actions which are to be considered by Cabinet. It is important that, as far as possible, the family environment is replicated in children's homes. It is important that when consideration is being given to returning a child to Cardiff that as much detail is obtained as possible to ensure that the right choice is made for the child.
- Members queried why 68% of referrals from the Police to the MASH were just for information and/or required no further action. The Assistant Director advised that the Police are sharing intelligence regularly and they feel that they have a duty to inform the MASH of

all cases. Members were advised that the referral being recorded as no further action means that it did not meet the threshold, although it does not mean that there are not other services which could be of help for example help with parenting skills and money advice.

- Members asked for clarification on how well the MASH was working and were advised that the feedback from all partners is excellent, in particular the ability to have open discussions. Referrals are increasing but that was expected, information as to whether cases are being referred to other providers would be of benefit when considering the figures.
- Members expressed concern about educational provision for those looked after children who are placed out of county. The Cabinet Member indicated that he has had discussions with colleagues from other authorities with a view to having reciprocal arrangements.
- Members asked about the recruitment strategy being developed for social workers and were advised that it needed to be broad strategy. The Assistant Director indicated that there are difficulties in recruiting to Child Protection Roles, although that was not only a problem in this area but across the whole country. Members were assured that recruitment continues to be a priority.
- Members noted that of 102 looked after children 93 are cared for by in-house foster carers. Payments to foster carers are the same whether they are independent or local authority carers. It is important to ensure that interest in becoming a foster carer is quickly translated into becoming a foster carer, if suitable and that it is important that the authority focusses its attention of marketing, assessment and the support of foster carers. Work is underway to look at the support that will make a difference to foster carers. The Corporate Director explained it was important to monitor the conversion rate from foster enquiries to foster carers and to monitor the shift towards in-house foster carers.
- Members expressed concern about the level of homelessness in care leavers and were advised that the figures provided are not accurate; currently the manner in which the figures are produced identifies care leavers who are in living in temporary accommodation as classed as being homeless.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

## 7 : CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIRECTORATE DELIVERY PLAN

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member – Children & Families), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People and Communities) and Irfan Alam (Assistant Director, Children's Services) to the meeting and to present the report.

The Corporate Director, People and Communities provided Members with a detailed presentation, but referred specifically to the Key principles underlying future vision; Prevention, Locality and Person-centred and also provided Members with details of Partnership delivery.

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

- Members queried how delivery is to be measured and were advised that there was an Action Plan outlining the work to improve outcomes and also specific project plans. The Corporate Director advised that the Action Plan could be circulated.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

## 8 : WAY FORWARD - CHILDREN'S SERVICES ITEMS

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.

## 9 : EDUCATION QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Cabinet Member – Education, Employment and Skills) and Nick Batchelar (Director Education and Lifelong Learning) to the meeting.

The Director made a statement in which he outlined the proposed changes in the way in which Estyn inspect Local Authorities; the changes will modify the approach to inspections, particularly in terms of self-evaluation of processes. He advised that proposals for increased provision for those with Additional Learning Needs would be taken to Cabinet in July for consideration. It is anticipated that pre-decision scrutiny of Additional Learning Needs would be on the agenda for the Committee's meeting in July.

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

- Members requested information about the staffing requirements for the new schools under development, and assurance that there will be suitable staffing. The Director advised there were a number of programmes in place to provide that assurance, including the National Leadership Academy for Wales for which a new Chief

Executive has been appointed, and that the Teach First Programme is doing well;

- Members were concerned to note to the levels of sickness absence for both teaching assistants and schools support staff, as there has been a slight increase in the figures.
- Members asked for information about the number of schools running recurrent deficit budgets. Members were advised that the Schools Budget Forum has been monitoring this closely, and good progress has been made through intervention. The Director confirmed that Michaelston Community College and Glyn Derw were now closed; improvements had been made at Cantonian High School; concerns had been raised at Eastern High School due to pupil numbers however, the school would be at full capacity from September 2018. There were still budget concerns about Willows, Glyntaff and Whitchurch High Schools. The Director also expressed concern about the budgets carried forward by primary schools, noting that some are cautious about using their budgets.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

## 10 : EDUCATION DIRECTORATE DELIVERY PLAN

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Cabinet Member – Education, Employment and Skills) and Nick Batchelar (Director Education and Lifelong Learning) to the meeting.

The Director provide Members with an outline of the Strategic Directorate Priorities

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

- Members noted the milestones and queried whether the authority is being overly ambitious. Members were advised that milestones can be useful, it is necessary however to reduce the number of performance indicators.
- With reference to the priorities outlined Members sought clarification as to what Officers felt the significant challenges were. The Cabinet Member outlined a number of challenges, the attainment gap, the number of school places, similar exam results across the City and consistent provision across the City.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

11 : WAY FORWARD - EDUCATION DIRECTORATE ITEMS

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.

12 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is on Tuesday 10 July 2018 at 4.30 pm

The meeting terminated at 7.40 pm