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**A Report of:
Children & Young People Scrutiny
Committee**

Annual Report 2014 – 2015

June 2015



The City and County of Cardiff Council

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP



Councillor Richard Cook
(Chairperson)



Councillor Paul Chaundy



Councillor Derrick Morgan



Councillor Iona Gordon



Councillor Dianne Rees



Councillor Jim Murphy



Councillor Jo Boyle



Councillor Ashley Govier



Councillor Lynda Thorne

Co-opted Members:



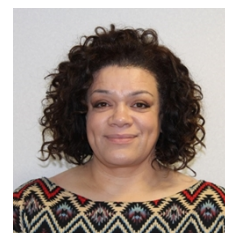
Mrs P Arlotte
Roman Catholic
Representative



Carol Cobert
Church in Wales
Representative



Ms Catrin Lewis
Parent Governor
Representative



Mrs Hayley Smith
Parent Governor
Representative

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

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Councillor Richard Cook

Chairperson of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

June 2015

INTRODUCTION

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee plays an important role in assessing service performance and informing service and policy development across a range of Council services, including all aspects of Education, Social Care for Children, Children's Play and the Youth Service.

This report presents the Committee's main activities during 2014-15 and wherever possible identifies the impact that the Committee has had on the services and support networks they have examined.

Between June 2014 and April 2015 the Committee Members have undertaken specialist training in performance information and budgeting and visited front line services. The Committee has scrutinised a wide range of topics contributing to the development and improvement of services for children and young people, a list of which is set out below under the following headings:

- **Inquiries** – Where the Committee has undertaken an examination of a topic over a period of time, resulting in a formal report to the Cabinet.
- **Policy Development** – Where the Committee has contributed to the Council's policy development processes by considering draft policy documents.
- **Pre-decision** - Where the Committee has evaluated and commented on policy proposals before they go to the Cabinet, giving the Cabinet the opportunity to know Scrutiny Members' views prior to making their decision.
- **Monitoring** - Where the Committee has undertaken monitoring of the Council's performance and progress in implementing actions previously agreed.
- **Call-In** - Where a Member has invoked the Call-in procedure under the Council's constitution, to review a Cabinet decision prior to its implementation.

Inquiries

- ❖ The Provision of Services and Support by the Child Health and Disability Team
- ❖ Impact of Poverty on Educational Attainment
- ❖ Looked After Children's Transition to Independent Living
- ❖ Looked After Children– Listening Event
- ❖ Corporate Parenting
- ❖ Tackling Human Trafficking in Cardiff - Joint CYP & CASSC Scrutiny
- ❖ Referrals in Children's Social Care
- ❖ Schools Causing Concern
- ❖ School Governor Recruitment.

Policy Development

- ❖ Early Help Strategy
- ❖ Regional Adoption Services.

Pre-decision Scrutiny

- ❖ 21st Century School Programme
- ❖ 2015-16 Budget Proposals.

Performance Monitoring

- ❖ ESTYN Inspection Report
- ❖ Children's Service – Quarterly Performance Monitoring
- ❖ Education and Lifelong Learning – Quarterly Performance Monitoring
- ❖ Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers
- ❖ CSSIW Evaluation on Social Care in Cardiff in 2013/14 (Joint CYP & CASSC Scrutiny)
- ❖ Central South Education Consortium – Annual Performance Report
- ❖ Youth Offending Service
- ❖ Integrated Family Support.

Call-in

- ❖ County Hall Nursery.

Inspection Reports

- ❖ CSSIW – Looked After Children
- ❖ Estyn – Monitoring Visit.
- ❖ WAO – Safeguarding of Children and Young People.

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has held 12 full Committee meetings, and two joint meeting with Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee since June 2014.

As a result of the consideration of over 40 reports covering policy development, pre-decision scrutiny, monitoring progress and service area performance, the Scrutiny Committee Chairperson wrote 23 letters to the Cabinet and officers, which included requests for additional information, comments, and observations on items considered at the Committee Meetings. Also as a result of these meetings the Committee wrote to the relevant Cabinet Member identifying 12 recommendations for the Cabinet and officers to consider.

The Committee received timely responses from the Cabinet to all letters that requested a response. In addition officers have provided information where requested and agreed to amend future reports in response to the Committee's requests.

Members of the Committee have also participated in a number of cross cutting short Task and Finish Group inquiries along with Members from other Scrutiny Committees. These included:

- ❖ Tackling Human Trafficking in Cardiff
- ❖ Community Hubs.

Centre for Public Scrutiny “Good Scrutiny” Award 2014



Pictured at the Awards Ceremony are 2012 - 13 Committee Chair Cllr Siobhan Corria (left) and 2013 – 14 Committee Chair Cllr Sue Lent (second right), along with Principal Scrutiny Officer Martyn Hutchings (right), Principal Scrutiny Support Officer Nathan Swain (centre) and members of Cardiff Youth Council James Humphry and Finley Morris.

The Committee’s engagement with young people *“Give Young People A Voice! Engaging Young People in Cardiff Scrutiny”* was highly commended at last year’s National Centre for Public Scrutiny Awards in the category: “Involvement, Insight and Impact”. The award ceremony took place on 10 June 2014 in London.

Main criteria for the award involved working in creative or innovative ways to achieve success and focusing on issues that are priorities or concerns of people who use services, communities or the public generally and demonstrating positive outcomes from working with them. Committee also needed to demonstrate

constructive change-management support to an organisation or community during a difficult or challenging period or helping to make the most of a particular circumstance, which has assisted executives, staff and local people to manage change. Judges also looked for evidence of effective teamwork or partnership work that demonstrates that outcomes from joint action were better than any single organisation could achieve on its own.

Committee's overall impact from Young People Engagement was:

- ❖ 14 Schools were represented at Key Stage 4 Listening Event
- ❖ 8 Task & Finish groups organised to hear from young people
- ❖ 27 Looked After Children were involved at Listening Events
- ❖ Young People gave evidence to 5 Committee meetings
- ❖ 7 recommendations to Cabinet were made at Listening Events
- ❖ Letter written to Council Leader about proposed £1.45m budget reduction
- ❖ Exposure to political decision making and local government
- ❖ Confidence to request further involvement at Committee
- ❖ Partnership with Cardiff Youth Council was developed.

Inspection and Assessment of Committee

The work of the Committee has been assessed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn), Wales Audit Office, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and the Council-commissioned WLGA Peer Review. The assessments have been undertaken through attendance as observers at Committee meetings, review of reports, minutes and letters, together with interviews with Councillor Richard Cook, the Chairperson of the Committee.

The outcome from each of the assessments was to acknowledge the Committee's key role in holding the Executive to account, aiding in the pre-decision scrutiny of policy development and to help challenge and monitor the performance of the services provided for Children and Young People in Cardiff.

Committee Member Development

As Scrutiny is a Member-led function whose success is closely linked to the capacity and capabilities of the Members who sit on Scrutiny Committees, the Scrutiny Team worked closely with colleagues across the Council to provide a continuous range of opportunities for Members to build or refresh their Scrutiny skills, and extend their knowledge and insight into a range of issues relevant to their Scrutiny role.

Most recently the Committee has agreed to develop a four-module programme of school performance and analysis training to further support the Council in improving the educational outcomes for its pupils. These outlined the various levels of accountability and performance reporting that underpin schools performance, with input from Scrutiny officers, corporate performance officers, managers from South Central Wales Consortium and the Council's Education Service.

All Members of the Committee actively participated in the training sessions and have also attended briefings, awareness raising sessions, and undertaken reflection sessions to help improve the impact of the Committee meetings.

Members of the Committee participated actively in training provided in the lead up to the round of Budget scrutiny meetings, focussing on analysis of generic and equality risk, and on questioning skills.

The Scrutiny development and training programme is an on going process and further opportunities will be identified to help Members in fulfilling the full span of their duties as an elected representative and community champion.

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Highlights from the Committee's Work Programme

This section of the Annual Report presents highlights of the Committee's activities during 2014-15 and where possible identifies the outcome and impact that the Committee has made through its work over the year.

The Provision of Services and Support by the Child Health and Disability Team

At its meeting on 13th January 2015 the Committee considered Cabinet's response to a report of the Committee titled "*Child Health and Disability Team*", (CHAD) which was presented to Cabinet in December 2013.

The inquiry was focused on looking at models of good practice in the provision of support and services to children with severe health and disability issues. The Task Group held five meetings receiving evidence from staff, Children's Services managers, voluntary organisations, users and visits to best practice authorities.

The Committee's report of this Inquiry identified 28 key findings and 18 recommendations which were presented to the Cabinet on 9 December 2013. The Cabinet agreed its formal response at its meeting on 15 December 2014 and their response shows that all of the report's recommendations have been accepted.

Director of Children's Services reported to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on a CHAD Development Plan. This plan was designed to respond to each of the recommendations in the report of the Scrutiny Inquiry. It was noted that the Development Plan has enabled the Children's Services Directorate to address significant deficits in the operation of CHAD, and it has initiated key work streams to enable the implementation of a new strategic approach and a partnership model of service.

It was noted that agreement has recently been reached with the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (UHB) to joint fund a ‘Change Manager’ post to prepare the detailed proposals and an accelerated implementation programme to enable delivery of improvements.

Mapping the Impact of Poverty on Educational Attainment

At its meeting on 13th January 2015 the Committee considered Cabinet’s response to a report of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee titled “*Impact of Poverty on Educational Attainment*”.

The Committee undertook this inquiry during 2013. The aim of the inquiry was for Members to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues faced by young people living in poverty, specifically in relation to their educational attainment. The inquiry looked at the attainment gap between Free School Meal (FSM) pupils and non-FSM pupils in Cardiff, the role poverty and deprivation play in this, and initiatives that can help to reduce this attainment gap.

In undertaking this inquiry the Members held 10 meetings, receiving evidence from 19 witnesses. This included meeting with young people, Welsh Government officials, charities, Council officers, University academics and consultants.

Members of the inquiry visited five primary schools and five secondary schools in Cardiff and undertook a visit to Swansea to visit a primary school and met with the Council’s Chief Executive, Cabinet Members and senior officers. Research was commissioned with the Scrutiny Research Team and Cardiff Youth Council where a team of young people undertook peer to peer interviews and presented their finding to the inquiry.

The Committee’s report of this enquiry was endorsed by Committee on 7 May 2013, and contained 42 key findings and 18 recommendations. The Cabinet considered the report and agreed its formal response at its meeting

on 15 December 2014. The Cabinet response shows that all of the report's recommendations have been accepted.

The Education Business Plan documents the actions to be taken, including timescales, along with quantitative targets for the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals. All Estyn improvement actions are included within the Education Business Plan.

Looked After Children's Transition to Independent Living

The Committee during its consideration of its work programme identified as its second Task & Finish Group inquiry the provision of services and support for Looked After Children in their transition to independent living. The inquiry held a number of meetings, including a briefing from Children's Services managers, a visit to the Leaving Care Team, a briefing from a Welsh Assembly Member and evidence from the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Task Group has also undertaken a "Call for Evidence" exercise with 22 third sector organisations who support and advise Looked After Children in their transition to independent living. The inquiry received evidence from the Scrutiny Research Team together with a visit to a best practice authority and feedback from a group of Looked After Children who had moved to independent living.

The report of the Task & Finish Group was presented to Cabinet on 19 March 2015, and a Cabinet response was received in April. All 10 recommendations were agreed, including a review of the Care Leavers Grant. Members recommended setting it at an appropriate level of £2,000 to enable care leavers to set up home. This recommendation was agreed with effect from 1st April 2015.

Following the report steps will be also taken to explore the feasibility of establishing a rent guarantor scheme for care leavers who require a private tenancy.

Looked After Children – Listening Event

At its meeting on 13th January 2015 the Committee considered Cabinet's response to Committee's scrutiny task and finish report on the *Listening Event with Looked After Children*, which was published in March 2014.

The Committee agreed as part of its work programme for this municipal year to develop a process to enable young people to have their views heard, and for those views to be heard by decision makers at a strategic, policy and / or operations level across the Council.

A number of young people attended the event, ranging from 6 to 11 year of age, and provided Members with their views, concerns and advice on improving services for Looked After Children. The event also enabled the young people to identify what they felt was currently working, so that this could be held up as best practice.

The resultant report which captured the main comments and views of the children, contained five key findings and was presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 17 July 2014, and Cabinet agreed its formal response at its business meeting on 15 December 2014. The response shows that the report's recommendations have been accepted, as well as detailing the Cabinet's response to the recommendation.

Corporate Parenting

The Inquiry arose from concerns expressed by Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel that the Panel did not have a statutory role or status, but had been adopted as a good practice mechanism to support the Council to fulfil its responsibilities as corporate parent to all children in care or leaving care in Cardiff.

The Committee agreed that the inquiry could give consideration to formalising the status of the Panel as a committee of the Cabinet; to widen the remit of the Panel

to include Children in Need; to adopt a structured annual cycle of reporting; to extend the business of the Panel to include consideration of Child Practice Reviews and to incorporate into the Work Programme of the Panel / Board a structured regular pattern of Member visits to frontline teams.

The joint Corporate Parenting Panel and Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group agreed to hold one evidence gathering meeting on 20th March 2014.

The Committee's report recommending the role and status of Corporate Parenting made five recommendations and was presented to Cabinet and Constitution Committee in June 2014. On 24 July Council reviewed and approved the establishment of a Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.

Tackling Human Trafficking in Cardiff (Joint Inquiry with Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee)

The Committee also undertook a Joint inquiry with the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee into *Tackling Human Trafficking in Cardiff*. This inquiry which covers the trafficking of adults and children resulted from a debate at Council. During a series of evidence gathering meetings Members heard from local agencies, the Police and the Crown Prosecution Services, and third sector agencies. Members also met with Council officers and Cabinet Members covering social services, education and housing services.

The report from the inquiry contained 16 recommendations and was presented to Cabinet in October 2014. A response was agreed at Cabinet in January 2015. Cabinet agreed in full to 12 recommendations, agreed partially to a further recommendation and did not accept three recommendations.

Members of the Committee have recommended that a progress report on the implementation of the agreed recommendations be included in the work

programme for 2015-16 and preferably be received at a joint meeting with Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee.

Children's Services Referrals

At their meeting on 3 November 2014 Committee agreed to undertake an investigation into Children's Services Referrals. The investigation was organised for Members to have a clear understanding of the Children's Access Point referral process, the issues behind the performance indicator for future performance data scrutiny and to identify any areas of concern, comment or suggested improvement.

The Meeting was organised for Members to receive background information, operational and procedural briefings, and anonymised information on live referrals together with detailed contact and referral data for the last two quarters.

The report highlighted four key findings and nine recommendations. A letter was sent to the Cabinet Member on 20 November 2014, and her response was received on 12 January 2015. The response shows that the report's recommendations have been accepted.

Schools Causing Concern

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee met on 12 March 2015 to begin a series of investigations to explore the factors challenging the performance of the City's schools currently identified as being in the "Red" performance category.

The investigation has been organised for Members to have a clear understanding of the processes in place to support and improve the performance of individual school in Cardiff; the issues causing poor performance in schools, and the key actions to be taken to address those issues. Members will constructively challenge

and test the actions being taken by head teachers and chairs of governors, from selected schools.

The Meeting was organised for Members to receive background information, operational and procedural briefings, presentations from the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors from one High School and one Primary School.

A further meeting was arranged for 14 May 2015, and the model could be extended into the next Municipal Year.

The outcome of the inquiry will be captured in a report for the Committee and will be presented to Cabinet in the near future. Cabinet's response will be brought back to this Committee for discussion.

High level of Local Authority Governor Vacancies in Cardiff and the Appointment and Effectiveness of Local Authority Governors

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee recently agreed to undertake a phased inquiry into Local Authority School Governors (LASG).

The first meeting of the inquiry was held on 20 November 2014 to agree the Scope of the inquiry and gain an understanding of the role of school governors; assess the level of local authority governor vacancies across Cardiff's schools. At the meeting Members received evidence on the present LASG recruitment and appointment process and to assess this against a selection of other local authorities' processes; and discussed and agreed changes to the current system to improve the effectiveness of Cardiff's schools governing bodies.

The first report of the inquiry highlighted the key findings and recommendations in relation to LEA Governor Appointments. The Scrutiny

Committee Task and Finish Group are recommending that the Council delegate its powers of LEA Governor Appointment to a cross party Member Panel. The Director of Education, Monitoring Officer and a representative from the Cardiff Governors Association would act as advisors to the Panel.

The Cabinet Member has confirmed support for these proposals and recommended to amend the Constitution on the council meeting on 29 January 2015 with implementation after the February half term break.

Regional Adoption Services

On 9 December Committee had an opportunity to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of the draft Cabinet report on the Regional Adoption Service before it was considered by Cabinet on 11 December 2014.

The establishment of a National Adoption Service is a key part of the implementation of the Social Services & Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014. The model agreed by the Deputy Minister for Social Services for the delivery of the new National Adoption Service visualises a two-tier functional model.

Committee was aware of the proposals for establishing the Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative which were contained in the reports to this Committee in July 2014. The recommendations of this report were subsequently resolved by the Cabinets in Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil to allow for the development of the Regional Adoption Collaborative. Whilst Cardiff's Cabinet resolved to agree to the Vale of Glamorgan Council establishing and recruiting to the Regional Adoption Manager post and secured agreement to the Vale of Glamorgan Council acting as the host authority for the Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative, the Vale of Glamorgan Cabinet did not make the recommendation in relation to the appointment of the Regional Adoption Manager and made an in-principle decision to the Vale of Glamorgan acting as host local authority.

Since the date of the last Cabinet Report and the Cabinet decision, plans to progress the National Adoption Service on a national and regional level have continued. As the host authority for the central elements of the National Service, Cardiff has worked with the WLGA to establish a national tier of the service with the appointment of the Director of Operations and other key personnel. The National Adoption Advisory Group has been established. The National Adoption Service was formally launched at the Senedd in Cardiff on 5 November during National Adoption Week.

On 22 December 2014 The Cabinet Member responded positively to the Committee letter, providing all requested information and reflecting on all the Committee's comments, concerns and recommendations.

21st CENTURY SCHOOL PROGRAMME – REALIGNMENT

The Council submitted its last 21st Century School Programme bid to Welsh Government in November 2011. The level of Capital Investment contained in that programme was £137m and was approved in principle in December 2011. Grant funding for each scheme is subject to approval by Welsh Government of detailed business cases. Since 2011, 10 school projects have been completed utilising some £28.2m of grant funding.

The report outlines the reasons why the Programme now needs to be realigned to take into account a number of fundamental changes that have occurred since 2011. These include population in the City, disparities in economic prosperity and educational outcomes, the sufficiency of school places and the condition of the educational estate.

The proposed vision for the realignment plan is to deliver “Inspiring, sustainable, community-focussed schools in which children and young people can achieve their potential”. It is proposed that this vision can be realised through the achievement of four Key Educational Aims that directly link to Welsh Government’s National Programme objectives.

Committee's letter is going to a future Cabinet meeting taking on board the recommendations made by the Committee.

2015-16 Budget Proposals

The Council's Constitution allows for Scrutiny Committees to consider the draft Cabinet budget proposals prior to their consideration by the Cabinet and Full Council. After a consultation meeting in January 2015 the Committee considered the Council's draft Corporate Plan and draft budgetary proposals for 2015 -16, included their detailed savings proposals and Capital Programme.

A number of mechanisms are being used to consult and engage with citizens and stakeholders to gather their views regarding the budget proposals. These included Cardiff Debate, links on the Cardiff Council website to the Council Budget, engagement with Trade Unions, engagement with Cardiff Partnership Board, Audit Committee, Cardiff Third Sector Council, Schools' Budget Forum, and Employee Consultation.

At Committee's meeting on 12th January a number of children and young people supporting the city's youth and play services asked to attend Committee to present their concerns about Cabinet's budget consultation proposals affecting Play and Youth Centres.

Following the consultation the key points that Members wished to make were as follows:

Impact of non-achievement of 2014/15 savings: Members noted that Children's Services was a positive example of a Directorate that achieved £2.6 million of its £2.7 million savings target for 2014/15 and that non-achievement of savings targeted for 2014/15 by other Directorates has increased pressures on this year's and future revenue budgets. With £6 million (17%) of 2015/16's savings proposal having a red residual risk rating and £2.3 million having a red achievability risk rating, the Committee urged the Cabinet and officers to maintain

pressure within the organisation on the management and achievement of performance targets. Members will be monitoring this vigorously during their quarterly performance monitoring in 2015/16.

Reduction to Collaboration Funding resources: Given the significant moves towards regionalisation and rationalisation of services reporting through this Committee over the past year and its likely future trajectory, Members were worried that the reduction of allocation for collaborative initiatives from £4.8 million to £2.5 million will limit capacity to remain agile to future opportunities to save money through collaboration.

Partnership for Change – service pressure risks: Members were concerned that if not properly managed and monitored, enabling employees to purchase additional annual leave and placing additional restrictions on agency and overtime could increase pressure on delivery of front line services that report through this Committee. The Section 151 Officer stated that these savings would need to be sensitively applied to ensure continuity and efficiency of the services provided, and this will be an issue that this Committee will consider monitoring during its 2015/16 work programme.

Potential alternative uses of the £2.5 million capitalisation under the Partnership for Change, and the Balance Sheet Review: Members discussed at length whether the Cabinet's proposed use of the £2.5 million windfall from Welsh Government's agreement to the Council's capitalisation proposal under the Partnership for Change would deliver best value for the Council's future needs. The capitalisation will be predicated on the disposal of assets that, once lost, will limit our future capacity to deliver services.

Members questioned whether it might be more prudent to use these resources in preventative work, notably – in the case of this Committee's terms of reference – in optimising transitional arrangements for future delivery of Youth and Play Services, and in the eagerly anticipated Children's Services Preventative Strategy.

Savings from Senior Management Posts: Members felt the £200,000 target proposed to be overly modest, and urged the Cabinet to consider increasing this allocation.

The Committee's comments on the budget proposals were considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 19 February 2015 and Council on 26 February 2015.

ESTYN Inspection Report

An ESTYN inspection of Educational Services in Cardiff took place in the summer of 2011, to help form a judgment on the local education authority's performance. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was of the opinion that the local authority was in need of significant improvement. An additional follow up monitoring visit was undertaken in February 2014, which recognised that progress had been made, but that there was still more that the local authority needed to do.

The Committee had previously been monitoring the service area's progress in improving educational attainment, and had been briefed on the new Director's strategy for educational improvement in November 2013. In April 2014 the Committee received a briefing from the Director of Education on the Estyn Inspection monitoring revisit letter, which identified six new recommendations for the Council to address. The Committee noted that an Action Plan was being developed and would be submitted as soon as possible.

The Committee agreed to closely monitor the implementation of the action plan as well as committing to the implementation of the four actions identified for Scrutiny to implement:

- Ensure that the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee receive clear, accurate and up to date information, together with improved quality analysis in all school performance reports;

- Develop and agree a clear protocol on the roles and responsibilities of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee and the Cardiff Partnership Board Scrutiny Panel in respect of the performance of education services;
- Develop and deliver a formal programme of training, covering education performance, analysis, and assessment, for Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee Members; and
- Establish a programme to scrutinise the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate's delivery of its Monitoring Revisit Action Plan which addresses Estyn's recommendations and which will improve educational performance in Cardiff schools.

The Committee also agreed to undertake a programme of performance assessment training to enable the Members to monitor, assess and challenge progress being made by all partners in improving the educational attainment of Cardiff's pupils.

Estyn undertook a further visit in March 2015 to assess progress in recommendations 3, 5 and 6. The outcome of this visit stated that the authority had begun to strengthen its capacity in delivering school improvement services and made improvements to its performance management processes and its scrutiny arrangements for education services for children and young people. However these improvements are still relatively recent and the local authority still faces many significant challenges, particularly in improving performance in key measures in a minority of its secondary schools.

The final monitoring visit is likely to take place in spring term 2016. This visit will focus on the progress made in all six recommendations. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector will determine whether sufficient and sustained progress has been made with enough pace for the category 'in need of significant improvement' to be removed, or conversely whether the authority be placed in special measures.

Quarterly Performance Reports – Children’s Services

In April 2015 the Committee noted generally good performance across many indicators; however they expressed their concern at a few indicators showing reduction in performance.

Following the Quarter 2 meeting in January 2015 the Committee was pleased to be informed that there have been improvements in performance of 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.

In April 2015 the Committee wrote that the quarter three performance highlighted general improvements in the overall performance of the service. In particular Members welcomed the percentage increase in the timelines of core assessments and initial child protection conferences despite an overall increase in the number of referrals, as well as the number of core assessments and initial child protection conferences. Members were also pleased to see that the Managed Team had reduced the overall number of cases down to 18.4 cases.

In respect of the Managed Team, Members questioned the exit strategy, as the team were still dealing with 220 cases. Members were aware that these cases would now have to be allocated across the social workers. The Committee also expressed its concern that even though the Managed Team was intended to be a temporary measure, it appeared that a robust exit strategy had not been developed.

The Cabinet Member responded positively to the Committee letters, providing all requested information and reflecting on all the Committee’s comments, concerns and recommendations.

The Committee confirmed its desire to continue to monitor, on a quarterly basis, performance reports from Children’s Services. The Members have been concerned that performance should, over time, meet agreed local

targets and wherever possible meet nationally set targets. The Committee has therefore regularly challenged performance, targets and action plans.

In April 2015, members expressed their concern that the recruitment process was unduly long and wrote to the Cabinet Member for Resources to undertake an urgent investigation to help speed up the recruitment process.

Performance Reports – Education and Lifelong Learning

The Committee has re-structured its approach to the scrutiny of education performance in 2014 – 2015 by scheduling throughout the year examination of particular aspects of performance, in addition to an overview of Annual Performance in January.

The performance monitoring reports enable Committee to review, assess and challenge the implementation of all actions and thereby the delivery of high quality education and improved outcomes for children and young people in Cardiff's Schools.

Following the meeting on 10 March the Committee was pleased to hear that overall improvement was made in response to Estyn recommendations. However Members still expressed concern that some schools were not showing signs of improvement.

Members also welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the plans of 21st Century School Programme before they are presented to Cabinet and identified a number of comments for Cabinet's consideration on their meeting on 19 March.

Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers

The Committee has regularly expressed its concern at the high levels of vacancies in Children's Services, in particular its influence on the Directorate's performance. The newly appointed Cabinet Member and Director of Children's Services informed the Committee of their commitment to focus on improvement in the recruitment and retention of social workers.

The Committee received a briefing on the work in progress to develop a strategy for the recruitment and retention of social workers in Cardiff. In addition management has been acting to replace agency staff with permanent employees and particularly to terminate high cost manager appointments by offering the opportunity to existing managers to take on additional responsibilities. The result of these recent temporary measures has been successful and has shown that there are talented individuals within the service who should be encouraged to seek promotion.

The Members received regular progress reports on the progress being made to address the high level of agency staff being used and the implementation of the strategy to enhance the recruitment and retention of social workers in Children's Services.

The Committee agreed to continue to monitor the implementation of the strategy.

CSSIW Evaluation on Social Care in Cardiff in 2013/14 (Joint CYP & CASSC Scrutiny)

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate Wales' (CSSIW) Performance Evaluation Report 2013-14 of the City of Cardiff Council Social Care Services provides their judgements on both Adult Services and Children's Services, and

details their findings on the key strengths as well as areas for development and improvement.

The report takes into account the Director of Social Services Annual Report 2013-14, as well as the views of other auditors, and draws on inspection work undertaken during the year. It also provides a summary of the overall review and evaluation of performance for 2013- 2014. The main messages in the summary are:

- The direction provided by the Director of Social Services has led to a more realistic approach to the allocation of resources in a climate of budget reductions.
- The Council is taking steps to prepare for the impact of the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014.
- Integration of services with the Vale of Glamorgan and the Health Board are being strengthened.
- There remains strong corporate support for the delivery of social services.
- It is not clear whether the areas of savings identified are sufficient to meet the savings required.
- Several Children's Services performance indicators describe performance below that of other comparable authorities and below the Welsh average.
- The appointment of a Director of Health and Adult Social Care has brought about improvement in some key areas of performance.
- There is evidence of consultation with the people of Cardiff, which has informed strategies for service development and highlighted areas in need of improvement.

The Committee's report made 9 recommendations and received a positive response from Cabinet Member, providing all requested information and reflecting on all the Committee's comments, concerns and recommendations.

Central South Consortium – Annual Performance Report

In July 2012 the Cabinet confirmed the Council's commitment to establishing a joint school improvement service with four other authorities (Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan) as the Central South Consortium (CSC). The Joint Education Service and LINKS service were created in September 2012 and the final legal agreement was signed by each authority in December 2013.

The Committee considered the Consortium's business plan at its meeting on 10 June 2014 as part of its consideration of the Education Business Plan. The Committee considered in detail the new role of the School Challenge Advisors, and looked forward to seeing the impact that these advisors are making in fostering steady progress of the School Improvement Groups and ensuring school wisely use any Pupil Deprivation Grant.

The Committee also agreed that as part of its work programme, it would scrutinise the Consortium to ensure that it provides the support, guidance and challenge needed for Cardiff's Schools to improve, along with outcomes for Cardiff pupils.

At their meeting on 11 November 2014 Members had an opportunity to gain an understanding and test the operation of the Consortium in its support to Cardiff schools (together with the Council) to improve learner's outcomes, deliver high quality teaching and learning and support, and empower school leaders.

In the letter sent on 14 November 2014 to Managing Director of Central South Consortium Members raised a number of concerns at the inconsistency in the operation and management by some Head Teachers, of the Performance and Personal Development Review system for teachers. Members recommended that the Consortium must identify and address any inconsistencies as soon as possible.

The Committee also expressed some concern around the general problem of the recruitment of high quality teachers, particularly in certain specific subject areas. Members suggested that the Consortium supports schools wherever possible in their recruitment process.

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CALL-IN – COUNTY HALL NURSERY

The Council's Call-In Procedure provides that any non-Executive Member may request to call-in a decision of which notice has been given in writing to the Operational Manager (Scrutiny Services).

The Committee at a special meeting on 3 September 2014 considered the Call-in of Cabinet Decision: CAB/14/022, made by the Cabinet on 17 July 2014, which was published on 21 July 2014 with an implementation date of 31 August 2014. The Cabinet resolved that the closure of the County Hall Staff Nursery be confirmed with effect from 31 October 2014 and the Council's continued commitment to supporting staff with childcare financially through childcare vouchers and through the Family Information Service to enable current users of the Nursery to find suitable alternative childcare placements be confirmed.

Members considered the merits of the decision as well as the process followed in making the decision. As a result of the information received, and answers to Members questions, the Committee unanimously agreed not to refer the decision back to Cabinet for further consideration.

The Committee however wrote to the Cabinet that following evidence heard from the officers about four areas which had been identified, with hindsight, as issues which could have been undertaken better, these were:

- the Task Group set up to consider the viability of the nursery did not have Terms of Reference
- the Task Group did not produce minutes
- the Equality Impact Assessment in the Cabinet report was not complete
- the Employee Handbook had not been updated.

Committee Members considered that not having terms of reference, not taking minutes and not having complete Cabinet reports gave the impression that the reconsideration of the original Cabinet decision to close the nursery was not a

serious exercise and lacked transparency. The Committee therefore recommended that for future decisions officers must ensure that the process, from the development of proposals through to the decision, can clearly be shown to be transparent, open and credible.

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Suggested Items for 2015/16 Work Programme

The Committee receives regular work programme updates at which Members have the opportunity to consider items, received from members of the public, young people, organisations, Council Members and other Scrutiny Committees, for inclusion on the work programme. Committee Members can also suggest any new issues which may be of interest to the Committee.

The Committee will be starting the development of its work programme in June 2015. It has recommended that the following issues could be prioritised for scrutiny:

- Schools Causing Concern
- Safeguarding
- Recruitment / Retention of Social Workers
- Estyn Action Plan
- Social Welfare Act
- Payment by Results.

The Council is responsible for co-ordinating the production of the main strategies and plans covering service development and provision across a range of services and agencies. The Committee's future work programme could include:

- ESTYN Action Plan
- Children's Services Improvement Plan
- Corporate Plan and Budget
- Youth Justice Plan
- Welsh Education Strategic Plan
- Integrated Family Support Team.

The Committee has undertaken a number of Task Group inquiries during the year and will be identifying further issues for consideration during June 2015. The Committee has however agreed its commitment to continue to hold further listening events with young people following the successful event last year.

It is suggested that the Committee continues to receive the regular progress and performance reports on:

- Children's Services performance
- Estyn Action Plan and school performance
- Budget proposals and monitoring
- Child Practice Reviews.

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