

**MINUTES OF RESILIENT COMMUNITIES AND CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
MEETING - THURSDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2018**

**Present:**

Councillor Rowson (in the Chair)

Councillors

Collett

O'Hara

D Scott

Stansfield

Critchley

Owen

Mrs Scott

L Taylor

**In Attendance:**

Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Secretary for Resilient Communities

Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning

Mrs Cindy Hunter, Head of Social Services

Mrs Louise Storey, Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker

Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager, Blackpool Council

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

**2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 07 DECEMBER 2017**

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the last meeting of the Resilient Communities and Children's Scrutiny Committee held on 7 December 2017 be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

**3 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

The Committee noted that there were no applications from members of the public to speak at the meeting.

**4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS**

The Committee noted that one decision had been taken by the Cabinet Secretary for Resilient Communities to revise the terms of reference for the Corporate Parent Panel.

**5 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the item contained within the Forward Plan, February 2018 – June 2018, 'Development Proposals for Improvements at Carleton Cemetery' that related to the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary and requested that an update be provided.

Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Secretary for Resilient Communities advised that the decision related to the expansion of the Crematorium. In addition, the Council was also seeking a tenant for the empty café on site.

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## **6 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN**

The Committee considered its Workplan for the remainder of 2018. The Chairman, Councillor Kath Rowson, advised that an item would be added to the Workplan on 'School Improvement' for November 2018, which would also incorporate the validated GCSE results. She also noted that the Committee would consider a report on Looked After Children and Child Protection in April 2018 and suggested that Members may wish to consider setting up a one off in depth meeting for further consideration of the topic following discussions.

The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to the 'Implementation of Recommendations' table and noted that a number of actions had been completed. She requested that a more detailed update on the meeting with newly qualified teachers be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee agreed:

1. To update the Workplan to include an item on School Improvement in November 2018.
2. To receive a more detailed update on the meeting with newly qualified teachers at the next meeting of the Committee.

## **7 CHILDREN'S SERVICES UPDATE REPORT**

Mrs Louise Storey, Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker and Mrs Cindy Hunter, Head of Social Services presented the report to Committee and advised that the main emphasis of the Children's Services Update Report was on demand management and performance against targets.

The Committee discussed the high number of Looked After Children and noted that although the figure had not decreased it appeared to have steadied. Mrs Hunter advised that the current focus was on working with children in care in order to move them to permanence such as adoption. It was queried if the target set for the number of Looked After Children was realistic and in response Mrs Hunter advised that the target had been set by considering every individual child and determining potential discharges from care. She added that the target was ambitious but based on analysis.

Members raised concerns that a review was required to ensure that school initiatives on literacy and work ongoing in the community was joined up. It was considered that there were a large number of ongoing schemes in place to improve literacy such as those being undertaken by Head Start and Better Start. Mrs Storey acknowledged that there was a significant amount of funding which was being utilised to provide a large number of schemes. It was agreed that the Committee receive a report to a future meeting detailing the expected outcomes and monitoring framework of schemes such as the Opportunity Areas in order to be assured that funding was achieving outcomes.

Members went on to focus on the work being undertaken by Better Start to ensure children were 'school ready' and queried work being carried out on the subsequent steps from primary to secondary school and then from school to work. Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning reported that schools worked with colleges and

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businesses to give aspiration and confidence to young people. She added that preparing young people for work was a priority of the Opportunity Areas.

In response to further questioning regarding the transition between primary and secondary schools, Councillor Benson advised that in her opinion the environment in 2018 was vastly different to the environment a number of years ago. She commented that there was more pressure on young people and that children and young people were considered generally to be not as resilient. She added that children did spend a week at secondary school whilst still at primary school and that further detail on transitions could be provided within the report to be received on School Improvement in November 2018.

Concern was raised that the poor performance of secondary schools had been known for a number of years and queried when improvements would be made. Councillor Benson advised that it was not an easy task to make vast and wide ranging improvements quickly, but that she hoped some improvement in attainment would soon be seen. She highlighted the recent improvements made at Highfield Academy and the latest Ofsted inspection of Unity Academy in achieving a 'good' outcome.

Asked about potential impact the Council could have on academies, Councillor Benson reported that all academies were attending and involved in the School Improvement Board and that they were committed to making improvements. The Chairman requested that the report to be provided on School Improvement also included reference to how initiatives had affected results.

Members considered whether it would be possible to ascertain the impact on attainment and performance of academisation of schools and requested that an analysis be undertaken of attainment before and after each school had become an academy. In addition, Members queried whether the performance of lower achievers and children with Special Educational Needs had been analysed to determine whether improvement could be demonstrated at any level. Councillor Benson agreed to report back to the Committee following the meeting on both queries.

The Committee discussed the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and queried the number of Looked After Children who had participated. Further detail was also requested regarding the number of young people who had not completed the Award and the reasons why. Councillor Benson agreed to provide a full response following the meeting.

The Committee went on to consider the performance data provided in relation to demand management and queried the dramatic increase in the number of Section 47 enquiries started per 10,000 population from March 2016 to March 2017. Mrs Hunter agreed to investigate the increase and provide a response following the meeting.

In response to questioning, Mrs Hunter advised that the Police would create a Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) referral when a young person was identified as at risk of criminal activity and submit it to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub for dissemination and support from partner agencies. In order to keep vulnerable young people out of prison, the Police often worked with young people in order to prevent them from receiving a criminal record. Members discussed Youth Justice in detail, Early Help in place around young people at risk of committing crimes and court directives and agreed to add a future

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item on Youth Justice to the workplan for detailed consideration.

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive a report to a future meeting detailing the expected outcomes and monitoring framework of schemes such as the Opportunity Areas in order to be assured that funding was achieving outcomes.
2. To receive regular updates on the progress of the Opportunity Areas Delivery Plan.
3. To include detail on how initiatives had impacted upon attainment and the impact of work on Transitions within the report on School Improvement to be received in November 2018.
4. To receive an analysis of attainment before and after each school had become an academy following the meeting.
5. To receive an analysis of the attainment of lower level achievers and children with Special Educational Needs to determine if improvement could be demonstrated following the meeting.
6. To receive detail regarding the number of Looked After Children participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and the number of young people who did not complete with the reasons why.
7. To receive detail on the increase in the number of Section 47 enquiries started per 10,000 population from March 2016 to March 2017.
8. To add Youth Justice to the Workplan.

## **8 CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE**

Mrs Louise Storey, Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker highlighted the arrangements and range of activities in place in order to prevent Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and abuse and to protect children and young people. She highlighted that work was multi-agency and that the Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board had a Sub-Group dedicated to the consideration of CSE and related concerns.

Members noted that the report highlighted difficulties in engaging with a small number of large organisations operating within Blackpool and queried the reasons why the difficulties had emerged. Councillor Cain, Cabinet Secretary for Resilient Communities reported that progress had been made with the organisations concerned and that there was a rolling programme of training and development in place. He also highlighted the importance of training for Members. Mrs Storey added that lack of engagement was often related to lack of knowledge and awareness of the subject matter and that the CSE Awareness Week and the Prevention Campaign had brought CSE to the forefront.

It was noted that late night takeaways were often a concern and Mrs Storey advised that the Licensing Department was very active and had already closed a number of late night takeaways. Premises were constantly monitored for signs of CSE activity. The Council employed a Child Protection Licensing Officer, which was a rare role and one specific to meet the needs of Blackpool. It was also reported that the Awaken Team and the Police worked closely to coordinate action against premises, including hotels.

The Committee observed that the data relating to the age range of victims and perpetrators of CSE demonstrated that a large number of offenders were less than five years older than their victims. It was queried whether there was any evidence to suggest

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that there was a link between being a victim of CSE and becoming a future perpetrator. Mrs Storey advised that she was not aware of any evidence demonstrating a link and would investigate further following the meeting.

In response to questioning, Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning advised that all Schools should have policies on safeguarding and child protection and agreed to investigate if such policies covered CSE and Sexual Health and where parents could obtain such policies. Members considered that awareness and understanding of parents was of paramount importance. Councillor Benson added that schools had 'safe spaces' where pupils could share experiences. It was noted that the majority of young people would not find it an easy subject to talk about and that schools included topics such as appropriate relationships and sexting within PHSE classes.

Members noted that 86% of staff within Children's Services had undertaken the CSE Training module and felt that 100% of staff should have completed the training.

Members went on to consider the differences between CSE, Child Sexual Abuse and Interfamilial abuse. It was reported that emphasis had been placed on CSE and that had ensured it was at the forefront. Work was being undertaken to ensure Child Sexual Abuse was equally regarded. Mrs Storey highlighted that training and support was a priority. Appropriate staff must be given the support and tools to spot the signs of abuse and given the confidence to deal with offenders. The Committee requested that regular updates be provided on raising the profile of Child Sexual Abuse and Interfamilial Abuse.

The Committee noted that Ofsted was undertaking a series of Joint Targeted Area Inspections on subjects including CSE and queried if partners would be ready for such an inspection. Mrs Storey advised that the Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board regularly audited cases and that an authority should always be prepared for an inspection of any kind.

In response to questions, Mrs Cindy Hunter, Head of Social Services reported that there was a positive emphasis on prevention which demonstrated that Services were both proactive and reactive. She added that prevention of CSE was well resourced in Blackpool and that partners worked well together and were committed to resourcing provision.

Concern was raised that there was not a clear, easy to follow pathway for a member of the public to raise concerns about suspected CSE or abuse. Mrs Storey agreed to consider the feedback and investigate the obvious route that a member of the public might take in order to identify any improvements that could be made.

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive information relating to a potential link between being a victim and subsequently becoming a perpetrator of CSE following the meeting.
2. To receive feedback on school policies and how parents accessed policies.
3. To receive regular updates on raising the profile of Child Sexual and Interfamilial Abuse.
4. That Mrs Storey consider the route that a member of the public might take when raising concerns related to CSE or abuse in order to identify any improvements.

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**9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee agreed to note the date of the next meeting as Thursday, 12 April 2018, commencing at 6.00pm.

**Chairman**

(The meeting ended at 7.59 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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