

**MINUTES OF RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 8  
DECEMBER 2016**

**Present:**

Councillor D Coleman (in the Chair)

Councillors

Collett	O'Hara	Scott
Critchley	Owen	L Taylor

**In Attendance:**

Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Secretary (Resilient Communities)  
Councillor Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning  
Councillor Amy Cross, Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Health  
Councillor Maria Kirkland, Cabinet Member for Third Sector Engagement and Leisure Services

Mrs Delyth Curtis, Director of People  
Ms Josephine Lee, Interim Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker  
Ms Kate Aldridge, Service Manager, Care and Support, Adult Social Care.  
Mr David Sanders, Independent Chairman of Blackpool Safeguarding Adults Board  
Ms Wendy Casson, Head Teacher, Educational Diversity  
Mrs Ruth Henshaw, Delivery Development Officer  
Mr Chris Kelly, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser (Scrutiny)

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

**2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2016**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 October 2016 were signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

**3 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

The Committee noted that there were no applications for public speaking on this occasion.

**4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS**

The Committee considered the Executive and Cabinet Member decisions within the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary, taken since the last meeting of the Committee.

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Members raised questions in regards to decision number EX44/16 'Secondary School Places and the Proposed Demolition of the Former Bispham High School', with a particular focus on the future use for the land at the site of the former school. Councillor Cain advised that consideration would be given to a number of options for the site, including the possibility of creating allotments. It was explained that the land would be retained in the short term for educational purposes until approval was received from the Department for Education to change the use of the site.

### **5 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the items contained within the Forward Plan, December 2016 – March 2017 within the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary and requested further details relating to the Headstart funding bid. Mrs Curtis, Director of People, advised that the £10 million funding bid had been successful and commissioning was underway to establish mental health and resilience programmes.

Members agreed to request that an update report be presented to the Committee providing feedback on the Headstart programmes, at a future meeting once they had commenced.

### **6 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2016/2017**

Mrs Ruth Henshaw, Delivery Development Officer presented the performance against the Council Plan 2015/2020 for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 September 2016 and highlighted the key exceptions.

Mrs Henshaw reported that a number of the Council Plan indicators for 'Resilient Communities' that were due to be considered by the Committee were either annual or bi-annual and therefore could not be reported on for the quarter.

Of the indicators where data was available, it was reported to the Committee that there were three indicators in which performance had deteriorated in Quarter 2 2016/2017:

- Achievement of five or more A\* - C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths
- Number of referrals / rate of referrals to social care per 10,000 children; and
- Number of looked after children / rate of looked after children per 10,000 population.

The Committee raised a number of questions relating to the number of referrals to Children's Social Care and the number of Looked After Children. Mrs Curtis advised that an audit process ensured that every child in care was appropriately placed, but that unfortunately Blackpool had the highest rate of referrals in the country, which was as a result of various factors. Members queried whether the picture in Blackpool was distorted

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through having a significant number of large families from which a high number of children were Looked After and queried whether data was available to show the number of families of Looked After Children. Ms Lee, Interim Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker advised that she would investigate whether that data could be made available. It was however noted that the current indicator used to measure Looked After Children rates was a national indicator and that the data requested would be limited as sibling groups did not always come from the same household and there were various examples of different family dynamics.

The Committee raised questions relating to the extent to which different ethnicity demographics had an impact on the numbers of looked after children in a local authority area. Mrs Curtis advised that she was unaware of a link but noted that there could be differences in the number of looked after children as a result of the size of the wider family support network. She reported that the context of looked after children in Blackpool had changed slightly over recent times and that a significant number of children were now coming into care from intergenerational Blackpool families.

The Committee agreed to request information to be presented to the Committee relating to the number of families of children that were Looked After, rather than the absolute numbers of children.

Further questions were raised by the Committee in relation to free breakfasts in schools and potential links to childhood obesity. In response, Councillor Cross reported that schools were now considered to be ordering the correct amount of food and that it was the responsibility of the headteacher in each school to ensure appropriate monitoring of the scheme to prevent children having more than one breakfast.

The Committee agreed to note the report and request information to be presented to the Committee relating to the number of families of children that were Looked After.

Background papers: None.

## **7 BLACKPOOL SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT**

Mr Sanders, Independent Chairman of Blackpool Safeguarding Adults Board, presented the Blackpool Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report, which provided evidence of the activity of the Board during 2015/2016.

Mr Sanders reported that the implementation of the Care Act 2014 had provided a formal statutory base for safeguarding adult boards, which had helped to strengthen the role of the Board "to safeguard vulnerable adults from harm and abuse by working effectively together".

The Committee was advised that alongside the challenges identified within the report for safeguarding of domestic violence, modern day slavery, self-neglect and the 'Prevent'

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agenda, there were also challenges relating to the issues of mental health and substance abuse, which provided an opportunity for joint work with the Safeguarding Children Board.

The Committee also noted that the training offer of the Safeguarding Adults Board had increased and additional resources for the Board had been made available from partners. The Committee queried whether more training could be offered regarding dementia care. Mr Sanders advised that there was due to be a Board Development Day during the following week, in which the training offer would be considered in detail.

Mr Sanders highlighted the four key priorities for the Board that were contained within the Business Plan, which covered the proposed activities of the Board until 2018. The Committee also noted the Care Quality Care inspection grading for contracted services were 20% better than the average for the rest of the country.

Members raised questions regarding the threats to the financial stability of care homes in light of recent budgetary pressures, for example the introduction of the National Living Wage. Mr Sanders advised that the issue was not as acute in the local Blackpool context as it was in the national context and Mrs Curtis advised that there were no current concerns over the ongoing viability of any care home in Blackpool. However, it was noted that some care at home providers may have issues regarding the viability of their contracts in the future, as was the case nationally.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None.

### **8 CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT**

The Committee considered a report on the work undertaken by Children's Services on a day to day basis and progress and implementation of developments within the service.

The Committee noted that Blackpool was in the top quintile for re-engaging 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) young people back into learning but raised concerns regarding dropout rates. Mrs Curtis advised that there were a number of different reasons for young people dropping out and that a workshop had been planned for later in December between the Children's Services and the College to review case studies of learners who dropped out, in order to identify potential improvements in systems support.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the high level of referrals to Children's Social Care and noted that one in 14 children in Blackpool had a social worker. Ms Lee advised Members of the work that was being undertaken to reduce numbers of children in social care, with specific reference to Early Help and attempts to put services in place for targeted interventions. The Committee was also advised of pre-birth intervention and the PAUSE programme, which provided support for women who had experienced or were at risk of, repeat removals of their children into care.

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The Committee questioned whether vacant social worker posts had now been filled and Mrs Curtis advised that whilst some positions had been filled, many social workers were choosing agency employment, which was regarded as a regional issue across the North West.

Members also questioned the reasons for the increasing diagnosis of autism and Mrs Curtis explained that reasons could include a greater general awareness of autism so parents were more likely to push for a diagnosis and a greater number of babies with complex needs surviving birth.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None.

## **9 ADULT SERVICES REPORT**

Councillor Cross provided the Committee with an update on the work undertaken by Adult Services. She drew Members attention to the Care Quality Commission Residential Care Inspection Outcomes Update, which demonstrated that Blackpool care homes were rated better than the national average.

Councillor Cross reported details of a respite pilot that was currently being run and for which an interim evaluation process had recently been completed. She noted that the contracts and commissioning team would continue to work with people to access suitable respite care. It was noted that there had been issues relating to pre-booking beds for respite care and Councillor Cross advised that it would be considered further as part of the pilot evaluation to investigate potential solutions.

The Committee noted that there had been 424 concerns referred to Adult Social Care for safeguarding consideration during the period 1 April 2016 to 30 September 2016 and questioned whether data was available for the same period for the previous year. Mrs Curtis advised that she would provide that information for Members.

Members noted that nine care homes had been rated as 'Requires Improvement' and one as 'Inadequate' by the Care Quality Commission and raised questions regarding the action plan and timescales for their improvement. Ms Aldridge, Service Manager, Care and Support, Adult Social Care, advised that it depended on the particular reasons for each individual care home being rated as 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'. She explained that the Care Home and Adult Services worked with the Care Quality Commission to develop an action plan for sustainable improvement with appropriate timescales, which were usually between three and six months. The care homes would then be held to account over implementing the action plans.

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The Committee questioned the impact of the New Models of Care / Vanguard developments and Ms Aldridge advised that there was still a lot of work to be undertaken and assessments made into which services worked well, before the aim of the programme could be fully realised.

Members raised further questions relating to winter pressures and how they were being managed, particularly in relation to transitions from hospital to home. Ms Aldridge reported that Adult Services tracked delays and identified pressures, then worked with the Hospital to alleviate issues.

The Committee agreed to:

1. Note the report.
2. Request that data be provided and circulated outside of the meeting on concerns referred to Adult Social Care for the period 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015.

Background papers: None.

#### **10 PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT SCRUTINY ACTION PLAN**

The Committee considered the action plan of the Pupil Referral Unit Scrutiny Review Panel and Ms Casson, Head Teacher, Educational Diversity reported the progress made against the recommendations. Members noted that the Inclusion Board had been established and would be chaired by Councillor Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning. Members also noted that permanent exclusions had reduced and it was explained that the improvements had been as a result of greater cooperation between schools, However, referrals to the Pupil Referral Unit from out of area children remained a concern.

The Committee was advised that in relation to Recommendation Four, the bid to the Department for Education Transformation Fund had not been successful. Mrs Curtis advised however, that there would be a significant focus on building resilience as part of the Headstart programmes.

The Committee agreed to receive the report as a final update on the recommendations made by the Panel.

#### **11 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2015 SCRUTINY PANEL FINAL REPORT**

Mr Kelly, Acting Scrutiny Manager presented the final report of the Educational Attainment 2015 Scrutiny Panel to the Committee.

The Committee agreed to approve and forward the final report to the Executive.

Background papers: None.

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**12 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN**

The Chairman presented the workplan to the Committee and highlighted the Implementation of Recommendations' table. Members requested that the Children's Services Overview and Adults Services Overview reports be presented at alternate meetings of the Committee.

The Committee agreed:

1. To approve the Scrutiny Workplan, subject to the above amendment.
2. To note the 'Implementation of Recommendations' table.

**13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as Thursday, 26 January 2017 commencing at 6pm in Committee Room A, Town Hall, Blackpool.

**Chairman**

(The meeting ended at 7.20 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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