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MINUTES OF RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 14
JULY 2016

Present:

Councillor Benson (in the Chair)

Councillors

Critchley O'Hara
Humphreys Scott

Mrs Frances McErlane, Co-opted Member

In Attendance:

Mrs Delyth Curtis, Director of People

Ms Amanda Hatton, Deputy Director of People (Early Help and Social Care)

Ms Karen Smith, Deputy Director of People (Adult Services)

Mrs Moya Foster, Senior Service Manager, Early Help for Children and Families

Mrs Ruth Henshaw, Engagement and Intelligence Officer

Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager

Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Secretary for Resilient Communities

Councillor Maria Kirkland, Cabinet Member for Third Sector Engagement and Development

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 9 JUNE 2016

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 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 taken since the previous meeting of the Committee.

The Committee agreed to note the decisions.

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5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the items contained within the Forward Plan, July 2016 – October 2016 within the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary and requested an update on the 'Head Start Round Three Funding Bid Result and Future Action'. Mrs Curtis, Director of People advised that the outcome of the bid would be announced by the Big Lottery on 20 July 2016.

Members also discussed 'School Place Planning Next Steps' and queried the impact the increase in academies had had on school place planning. In response, Mrs Curtis advised that the responsibility to ensure there were enough school places for children remained with the local authority. She added that the relationship with academies and multi academy trusts was improving. In response to further questioning, it was reported that the Fylde Coast Academy Trust bid for a new free school in Blackpool had successfully reached the second stage of application. It was noted that the final decision would be taken by the Department for Education.

6 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Chairman highlighted the 'Implementation of Recommendations' table and noted that the request for a briefing paper on the regulation of Adult Social Care Services was outstanding. Ms Karen Smith, Deputy Director of People (Adult Services) reported that a paper was being prepared and would be circulated as soon as possible.

The Committee agreed:

1. To approve the Scrutiny Workplan.
2. To note the 'Implementation of Recommendations' table.

7 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mrs Ruth Henshaw, Corporate Development Officer presented the performance against the Council Plan 2015/2020 for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and highlighted the key exceptions.

Members raised a number of questions regarding the performance indicator relating to the death to service time for cremation. In response, Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Secretary for Resilient Communities advised that the crematorium did have sufficient capacity and availability for cremations to occur within the target time, however, service users had a choice regarding when to hold the cremation. He added that the number of times on offer during the day had been increased and services were also being offered on Saturdays. However, delays would still occur if friends and families were very specific regarding the time and day of the service. In response to further questioning, Councillor Cain reported that there was a choice of service length of 30 or 45 minutes and that both service lengths were available at the same cost.

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The Committee noted that in relation to the death to service time for cremations there were three clear factors contributing to delays, the third of which was highlighted as the length of time the West Lancashire Coroner took to process paperwork if the death occurred outside of Blackpool and Members queried why that was the case. It was agreed that a full written response would be sought following the meeting.

Assurance was sought by the Committee that Adult Social Care service users who had not received a completed review were safe. Ms Karen Smith, Deputy Director of People (Adult Services) advised that reviews were completed in priority order due to the difficulties in undertaking annual reviews caused by the significant increase in volume. She added that priority was given to new service users and those with variable conditions, with lower priority given to stable service users identified as a lower risk. In response to further questions, Ms Smith advised that further investment would be made to appoint new social workers based on the evidence of increased volume and some elements of the system had been streamlined.

Members discussed the indicator relating to the number of permanent admissions to residential care per 100,000 of population and noted that numbers in Blackpool were significantly higher than the national average. Councillor Cain reported that Blackpool had been an outlier for the indicator for 15 years. He added that a robust system was in place to ensure that permanent admissions to care were only made when necessary and that Blackpool had a greater supply of residential care allowing the decision to be taken when required.

The Committee queried whether the introduction of the NHS's Vanguard New Models of Care approach would have an impact on the number of permanent admissions to residential care. In response, Ms Smith advised that in her opinion, it was unlikely to have any immediate impact.

Following a discussion regarding the increasing number of Looked After Children, Members queried progress made in developing an in house therapeutic unit. Councillor Cain advised that investigations were ongoing into the best way in which to offer therapeutic services. Responding to further questions, Ms Amanda Hatton, Deputy Director of People (Early Help and Social Care) reported that an audit was currently being undertaken on the 49 children taken into care between 1 April 2016 and 15 June 2016 in order to ascertain key data including where the children were from, the school attended, age and previous contact with social services. The Committee requested that a future thematic discussion be held regarding the increasing number of looked after children and the response to the increase.

It was noted that the target had not been met for the percentage of children subject to a child protection plan for a second time and Members questioned why the target had not been met. Ms Hatton advised that a child becoming subject to a plan for a second time was not always poor performance, however, if the child had been subject to a plan within the previous two years for similar issues that suggested that the issues had not been resolved before the child had been removed from a plan the first time. She added that an audit had

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been undertaken and had demonstrated that children had been removed from a plan too early on three occasions.

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive a written response following the meeting regarding the length of time the West Lancashire Coroner took to process paperwork if the death occurred outside of Blackpool and the impact on time from death to cremation.
2. To hold a thematic discussion on the number of looked after children and the response to the increasing number at a future meeting.

8 ADULT SERVICES REPORT

Ms Karen Smith, Deputy Director of People (Adult Services) presented the Adult Services Report to the Committee and the Chairman invited questions.

Members commended the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection report of the in house Shared Lives Service and queried what more the service could do in order to achieve an 'outstanding' rating. In response, Ms Smith advised that she had posed the same question to the CQC and advised that it was very difficult to achieve an outstanding judgement.

It was noted that the number of direct payments remained low and Ms Smith advised that the take up was improving and that the Direct Payments Team offered support to service users who wanted to utilise direct payments, but that many still preferred that the Council purchase care on their behalf.

The Committee discussed the safeguarding of adults and requested a more detailed report and further analysis of the safeguarding figures be provided in the next Adult Services Report to Committee. Members also queried the number of safeguarding alerts at The Harbour. In response, Ms Smith advised that Lancashire Care Foundation Trust (LCFT) was responsible for managing the safeguarding alerts at The Harbour and had clear lines of responsibility to the Blackpool Safeguarding Adults Board. It was noted that the Health Scrutiny Committee was holding a special meeting with LCFT regarding The Harbour in October 2016 and Members agreed to request that safeguarding at The Harbour be considered as part of that meeting.

The recent cessation of contract with a residential care home was considered and Members sought confirmation that residents had been moved to alternative accommodation in a safe and sympathetic manner. Ms Smith reported that a number of previous experiences had indicated best practice in moving residents and that sufficient support had been provided to all residents throughout the process. In response to further questions, Ms Smith advised that should any Member have concerns regarding a care home these could be indicated by email. It was requested that the relevant email address be circulated following the meeting.

Members noted that work was being undertaken to give flexibility to care at home providers including potentially banding time and taking a zoned approach to provision. In response to questions, Ms Smith advised that best practice would be sought from other Councils and

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Councillor Cain added that it was not the policy of Blackpool Council to commission 15 minute visits. The Committee also noted the ongoing discussions regarding the administration of medication.

It was noted that a large amount of work was ongoing with regards to dementia services and Members queried how the work carried out in house linked to schemes being provided externally and it was agreed that a written response would be provided following the meeting detailing the Dementia Friends work.

The Committee considered the results of the annual service user survey and noted that 70% of service users reported feeling safe and queried the reasons why the remaining 30% did not feel safe. In response, Ms Smith advised that there were a number of reasons why service users did not feel safe and that all service users who had indicated they did not feel safe had been asked following the survey with work undertaken to resolve the issues.

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive a more detailed report and further analysis of the safeguarding figures in the next Adult Services Report to Committee.
2. To request that safeguarding at The Harbour be considered as part of the special meeting to be held by the Health Scrutiny Committee in October 2016.
3. That the relevant email address for reporting concerns regarding care homes be circulated following the meeting.
4. That a written response be provided following the meeting regarding the work of Dementia Friends and how it linked to the work undertaken on dementia by the Council.

9 CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT

Mrs Del Curtis, Director of People presented the Children's Services Report to the Committee and the Chairman invited questions.

The Committee discussed the preventative work being undertaken to prevent young people from leaving college prior to the completion of courses. Mrs Curtis advised that approximately 90 young people at risk of not going to college or leaving prematurely once in college had been identified and targeted through a specific scheme. She advised that the scheme entitled Summer Ventures Programme had had a high success rate and that the scheme would be repeated with a new intake in August 2016.

Members discussed the challenge provided to early years' settings as part of the Ofsted inspection process and queried whether the physical environment was also inspected. It was agreed that information regarding building and physical environment inspections of providers would be circulated following the meeting.

The Committee discussed serious high profile cases from the last few years noting the cases of 'Baby P' and Victoria Climbié and highlighted that key concerns raised from the cases included partnership working between local organisations such as the Council and NHS. In

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response to questions following the discussion, Mrs Curtis reported that Blackpool had a strong Blackpool Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) in place with a number of Sub Groups that encouraged collaboration between organisations. She added that the BSCB oversaw a shared vision and shared datasets and that it was recognised by organisations in Blackpool that the safeguarding of children was every agency's responsibility. In response to further questioning, Mrs Curtis advised that improvements could always be made and that innovative solutions were always being sought such as the co-location of operational multi-agency teams such as the Families in Need team based at the police station. She added that similarly police officers were based at South King Street with Social Care Teams.

The Committee went on to consider The Alternative School (TAS) which had recently opened in Blackpool offering an alternative to mainstream education for a small number of pupils. Mrs Curtis advised that mainstream schools could commission places in The Alternative School for pupils finding it difficult to attend mainstream education. In response to questioning, she added that the provision would follow the national curriculum but teaching would be based across small groups of pupils. She also reported that feedback on the school had been positive.

The Committee agreed:

That information regarding building and physical environment inspections of providers be circulated following the meeting.

10 THEMATIC DISCUSSION: EARLY HELP

Ms Amanda Hatton, Deputy Director of People (Early Help and Social Care) provided an overview of Early Help advising Members that it was a very wide area of work focussing on intervening early and taking a partnership approach to activity. She highlighted that the Blackpool Safeguarding Children's Board had introduced an Early Help Steering Group to identify what was working well and what required improvement.

The key challenges of Early Help provision in Blackpool had been identified and included the impact of early help on the number of open cases to social care not being clear, the inconsistent approach taken to children identified as vulnerable, the lack of data on activity undertaken by agencies providing universal services and the pressures on partners regarding competing priorities. Ms Hatton also highlighted the key strengths and opportunities of Early Help in Blackpool such as successful Troubled Families projects.

Ms Hatton reported that the Early Help Steering Group was considering best practice in other areas and had identified potential future ways of working including increased emphasis and use of children's centres as a hub and to identify a shared vision such as the Resilient Therapy Approach to all activity. The importance of successfully 'stepping down' cases was also highlighted.

The Committee discussed a recent initiative targeting domestic abuse offenders whereby six of eight men had completed a programme to prevent future offending. In response to questions, Mrs Moya Foster Senior Service Manager, Early Help for Children and Families

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reported that the success of the programme would be monitored regularly and that a support group had been established for participants to maintain progress.

In response to further questions, Ms Hatton advised that it was often difficult to measure the impact of Early Help activity. The aim of activity was to reduce the number of future complex cases, however, research suggested that successful Early Help activity actually identified more complex cases.

The Committee went on to discuss the development of the Early Help Strategy and noted that a partnership approach would be a common theme in the strategy. Ms Hatton advised that work was required to identify potential outcomes for the strategy, how impact would be measured and the needs of the community. She added that research of other authorities that had successfully reduced the number of looked after children was being undertaken to identify learning points.

Members noted the increased need in pastoral care provision in schools and queried how that could be addressed. Ms Hatton advised that good pastoral care was a key part of the Head Start bid and that should the bid prove successful the improving resilience programme would be delivered in every school in Blackpool.

The Chairman asked how the Resilient Communities Scrutiny Committee might positively impact upon the Early Help work. In response, Mrs Curtis advised that partners were working together to develop relationships and build on current Early Help provision. She added that providing a challenge to all partners was important and that the Blackpool Safeguarding Children's Board also had a key role in providing that challenge.

11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as Thursday, 1 September 2016 commencing at 6pm in Committee Room A, Town Hall, Blackpool.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.51 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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