

**MINUTES OF RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 1
SEPTEMBER 2016**

Present:

Councillor Benson (in the Chair)

Councillors

Critchley	O'Hara	Singleton
Humphreys	Scott	Stansfield

In Attendance:

Mrs Del Curtis, Director of People

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

Mrs Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources

Mrs Josie Lee, Interim Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker

Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager

Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Secretary (Resilient Communities)

Councillor Amy Cross, Cabinet Member for Reducing Health Inequalities and Adult Safeguarding

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

Councillor Debbie Coleman, Cabinet Assistant (Resilient Communities)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 14 JULY 2016

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 July 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 noted that no Executive and Cabinet Member decisions had been taken since the previous meeting of the Committee.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the items contained within the Forward Plan, September 2016 – December 2016. Mrs Del Curtis, Director of People advised that the decision 'School Place

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Planning Next Steps' was no longer required following the approval by the Department for Education of the Fylde Coast Academy Trust's application for a new free school.

6 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Chairman presented the workplan to the Committee and highlighted the 'Implementation of Recommendations' table. It was noted that a number of actions had been completed since the last Committee meeting and Members were pleased with the quality of responses received.

The Committee agreed:

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

7 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 Chairman noted that the recent HMI Monitoring visit had determined that 'sufficient progress' had been made at South Shore Academy and queried whether sufficient progress was satisfactory. Mrs Curtis advised that it was considered that South Shore Academy was progressing at an acceptable rate. In response to further questions, she advised that the GCSE results for individual schools were not yet available as the data had not been formally validated, however, on average, the results in Blackpool had improved in comparison to 2015.

The Committee discussed the approval by the Department for Education of the free school bid made by Fylde Coast Academy Trust (FCAT) and requested additional detail regarding the size and opening times of the new school. In response, Mrs Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources advised that the school would gradually build in size to a capacity of 1,180, of the places 60 were nursery, 420 primary and 700 secondary. The first pupils were expected to commence in September 2017 and the school would be situated on the site of the Arnold School. Members expressed concern that the level of information regarding the development of the new school, provided to Ward Councillors in particular, was not adequate and it was agreed that Mrs Curtis would approach FCAT to ask for additional, regular communication to be provided to key stakeholders.

The level of detail regarding Safeguarding Children contained within the report was discussed and Members expressed concern that the detail included was not sufficient enough to allow effective scrutiny. It was agreed that Members would give consideration to the safeguarding content required in future reports and that the Chairman would send a request to Mrs Curtis following the meeting.

Members discussed the programmes currently on offer to children and young people in Blackpool including the apprenticeships being offered by the Calico Group and the Prince's

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Trust 'Get Into Retail Programme.' In response to questions Mrs Curtis advised that the Prince's Trust programme was being offered at no cost to the Council and that she would circulate additional information following the meeting.

Members went on to discuss the pledges made at the Corporate Parent Conference and noted that Blackpool Operating Company had recently employed four of 'Our Children' as apprentices and that Blackpool Entertainment Company had offered mock interviews. It was noted that the Conference would be held every two years and it was agreed that an update to the pledges document would be circulated after the meeting.

The Committee queried what action would be undertaken following the completion of the audit of placements. In response, Mrs Josie Lee, Interim Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker advised that the audit had demonstrated that the thresholds for referral were appropriate and that the key areas of action were the reunification of children with parents and identifying a resource to provide support to parents.

The Committee agreed:

1. That Mrs Curtis would approach FCAT to ask for additional, regular communication to be provided to key stakeholders regarding the new free school.
2. To consider the safeguarding content required in future reports and send a detailed request to Mrs Curtis following the meeting.
3. To receive additional information regarding the Prince's Trust 'Get Into Retail Programme' following the meeting.
4. To receive a copy of the Corporate Parent Conference Pledges.

8 SCHOOL LED SYSTEM AND BLACKPOOL CHALLENGE UPDATE

Mrs Del Curtis, Director of People highlighted the complexity of the new school led system to Members noting the different types of schools and governing bodies in Blackpool. She advised that the funding currently allocated to Local Authorities for school improvement would eventually be removed and that school leaders would be expected to drive improvement. Local Authorities would continue to lead on the allocation of school places, Elective Home Education, Educational Diversity and supporting Looked After Children at school.

Members discussed the exclusion policy of individual academies and noted the recommendation of the Pupil Referral Unit Scrutiny Panel to support the Blackpool Challenge Board in its objective to provide a consistent approach to exclusion across all schools and reduce the number of referrals to the Pupil Referral Unit through the introduction of the Behaviour and Attendance Partnership and Inclusion Board. Mrs Curtis confirmed that the recommendation had been implemented to good effect and that all schools were currently complying. As a result the number of exclusions across Blackpool schools had reduced. However, new to area referrals were still significant.

The Committee went on to consider the accountability of academies and Mrs Curtis advised that academies and academy trusts were ultimately accountable to the Regional Schools

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Commissioner. Any concerns regarding academies would be reported to the Commissioner for consideration and action if required.

Mrs Curtis drew Members' attention to the work of the Blackpool Challenge Board over the previous 12 months and commented that it had achieved a number of positive outcomes to date including improved communication amongst schools and better partnership working. She advised that the Chair, Professor Sonia Blandford had been commissioned for a further year to lead on summit meetings based upon four key themes – recruitment and retention, aspiration, employability and innovation/good practice. However, the message from the Department for Education that school improvement must be school led was clear. To that end, a new School Improvement Board had been established to run alongside the Challenge Board, which would be attended by school leaders and focus on good educational outcomes.

Members queried whether the Challenge Board had provided a tangible improvement to schools in Blackpool and Mrs Curtis advised that there had been a small improvement in overall GCSE results in 2016, however, it was difficult to attribute the improvement either directly or in part to the Challenge Board.

The Committee agreed that, subject to a final written response to be circulated by Mrs Curtis following the meeting to the Pupil Referral Unit Scrutiny Panel recommendations that they be signed off as completed.

9 CUSTOMER RELATIONS TEAM ANNUAL REPORTS ON ADULT SERVICES AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES 2015/2016

Mrs Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources presented the Customer Relations Team Annual Reports for 2015/2016 on Adults and Children's Services to the Committee. The production of the annual reports was a statutory requirement.

Mrs Wood responded to the request made by the Committee when considering the 2014/2015 Annual Reports that consideration be given to utilising a similar form of feedback as the NHS Friends and Family Test. She advised that following investigation it had been identified that the NHS Choices website included social care providers and that processes were being put in place, following the Committee's request, to ensure service users were aware of the opportunity to provide feedback in that way. The feedback would be used as a form of evidence during performance monitoring.

Members considered the annual reports in detail and queried the statutory response times for complaints. In response, Mrs Wood advised that the statutory response time for Stage 1 of a complaint relating to Children's Services was 10 days and that the statutory response time for a complaint relating to Adults Services was six months. However, if response times could not be met with a full reply to the complaint, then contact would be made to explain the reasons why and when a full response would be provided.

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It was noted that the percentage of complaints responded to within timescales for Adult Services had reduced from 53% in 2014/2015 to 48% in 2015/2016 and queried why that was the case. Mrs Wood reported that complaints had increased in complexity with a number of interconnected complaints often contained within one overarching complaint. She reiterated that if a response to a complaint was delayed the complainant would be kept informed. Ms Smith, Deputy Director of People (Adults Services) added that the approach to responding had been changed contributing to the extra time required to respond. Once the change in approach was embedded the speed of response would improve.

The Committee discussed the 'lessons learned' from complaints and it was considered important to try to prevent reoccurrences by disseminating the learning across services, however, it could not be guaranteed that a mistake would not happen again.

Members were pleased to note that children and young people had felt able to make a complaint without concern that it might affect the quality of their care.

In response to further questions, Mrs Wood advised that she did not have the details of the complaint that had been upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman regarding maladministration and injustice and would circulate further details following the meeting. She confirmed that any recommendations made by the Ombudsman would be implemented.

The Chairman concluded the item by highlighting the compliments and comments contained within the report and thanking staff for their hard work and contribution.

The Committee agreed to receive further detail on the upheld complaint regarding maladministration and injustice following the meeting.

10 ADULT SERVICES REPORT

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

Members queried whether a reason could be identified for the increase in the number of requests for new adult social care assessments. In response, Ms Smith advised that no reason had been identified, although it was indicative of a national trend. She added that the number of new assessments requested would continue to be monitored.

The Committee considered the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of the Council's Domiciliary Care Services and Residential Crisis Service based at the Phoenix Centre that had rated services 'Good' and queried the improvements required to ensure services were rated 'Outstanding'. Ms Smith highlighted that an action to demonstrate the impact of services and how the impact could be evidenced had been identified.

In order to highlight the complexity of services, two case studies had been provided to Members. The first case study demonstrated the Mental Health Rehabilitation Service and

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how the service supported adults to achieve independence. Members queried the level of service available and were informed that four rooms were available and that service users could remain for up to one year. In response to further questions, Ms Smith advised that the service was largely funded by the NHS and that there was unlikely to be an increase in funding to allow increased provision.

The second case study highlighted the relationship between the Council and a care at home provider. Ms Smith advised that the monitoring arrangements put in place were very rigorous and that if a complaint was received regarding any service it would be investigated immediately. She added that a CQC inspection was an indication of the provider at that moment rather than an ongoing reflection. It was unusual for the findings of the CQC to vary significantly from the view provided by Council performance monitoring.

Members expressed concern regarding the issues raised in the case study including staff falling asleep on duty and high levels of safeguarding activity and noted the action taken by the Council and the provider in order to ensure the required improvements had been made.

The Committee also noted that the CQC regularly announced visits, which allowed providers to prepare in advance for the inspection, and was of the opinion that all CQC inspections should be unannounced. It was considered that the Council's performance monitoring provided a more up to date view of the provider. Ms Smith advised that the Council worked closely with the CQC and shared information.

11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as Thursday, 13 October 2016 commencing at 6pm in Committee Room A, Town Hall, Blackpool.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.47 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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