

Medway Council
Meeting of Children and Young People Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6 October 2016

6.30pm to 9.20pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present: Councillors: Avey, Cooper, Franklin, Howard, Johnson, Kemp, Opara, Price, Purdy, Royle (Chairman), Saroy, Wicks (Vice-Chairman) and Williams

Added members without voting rights:

MYP Chairman (Medway Youth Parliament Chairman), MYP Cabinet Member (Medway Youth Parliament) and Dan Hill (Substitute - Healthwatch Medway CIC Representative)

Substitutes: Councillors:
Iles (Substitute for Fearn)

In Attendance: Ian Sutherland, Interim Director, Children and Adults Services
Ann Domeney, Interim Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services
John Drew, Independent Chair of Medway Safeguarding Children Board
Gerard Flanagan, Interim Programme Lead
Sameera Khan, Assistant Head of Legal Services
Michelle Lofting, Consultation and Intelligence Officer
Stephen Platt, Democratic Services Officer
Graham Tanner, Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead

338 Tribute to Councillor Mike O'Brien

At the commencement of the meeting, the Committee held a minute's silence in memory of Councillor O'Brien.

339 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fearn, Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church representative), Alex Tear (Church of England representative), Tina Lovey (Head Teacher representative) and Paddy Powell (Healthwatch Medway CIC representative).

340 Record of meeting

The record of the last meeting of the committee held on 1 September 2016 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct, subject to Councillor Opara's apologies being recorded.

341 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none; however the Chairman took the opportunity to welcome Luke Morgan and Chichi Nwodoh, Medway Youth Parliament Chairman and Cabinet Member respectively, to their first meeting of the committee.

342 Declarations of interests and whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

343 Medway Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2015-16

Discussion:

The Chairman of the Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB), John Drew C.B.E., presented the MSCB Annual Report 2015-16. He drew the Committee's attention to the reforms to the system for safeguarding children in England, as set out in the Children and Social Work Bill which was currently under consideration by parliament. These would give local partnerships greater freedom to develop local structures. In referring to the conclusions of Ofsted's inspection in September and October 2015, which identified improvements in services since the inspection in 2013, the Chairman of the MSBC highlighted what more could be done to maintain these improvements and make more progress. The areas considered to be of growing importance were the recruitment and retention of an experienced workforce; developing services to address the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE); and improving safeguarding in relation to Cookham Wood Young Offender Institution and Medway Secure Training Centre.

Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included:-

- **Medway Secure Training Centre** – At the request of a Member, the Chairman of the MSCB advised the Committee of the action taken following the BBC programme on the centre. There remained some specific issues highlighted in the programme that required further review, including the steps taken by the organisations operating within the centre to address poor behaviour by their employees. He explained the process followed in setting up a Serious Case Review. A Member who had

visited the centre raised concerns that the education facilities were not being fully used by the young people at the centre. The Chairman of the MSCB agreed that issues such as this needed to be addressed. The Director of Children and Adults Services (Interim) added that joint collaborative work was being undertaken with other areas where incidents had occurred. Opportunities for greater community engagement, for example enabling young people to undertake education outside the centre, were being explored.

- **Agency attendance at MSCB meetings** – In response to a question about the attendance record of NHS England, the Chairman of the MSCB reported that both NHS England and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service found it difficult to attend meetings. He therefore discussed the agenda items with the representatives before each meeting.
- **Operation Willow** – A Member noted the success of this operation in raising awareness around child sexual exploitation and asked about its future. The Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services (Interim), advised that the placing of two social workers within the CSE team at Kent Police headquarters had delivered some success. The operation had been adjusted to provide greater clarity of roles.
- **National Working Group for Safeguarding** - At the request of a Member, the Chairman of the MSCB undertook to find out more about this parental group.
- **The role of schools in tackling CSE** – In response to a comment from a Member, the Chairman of the MSCB observed that schools were the first line of defence in tackling CSE and undertook to consider how this role could be better reflected in future Annual Reports.
- **Child Death Overview Panel** – In response to a question on what modifiable factors the panel had identified, the Chairman of the MSCB advised that the Board had recently received a report on this and undertook to provide a briefing note for the Committee. Noting that the panel consisted of informed lay people, a Member asked how the Council could best signpost people to panel members. The Chairman of the MSCB undertook to raise this with the Governor of the centre.
- **Female genital mutilation (FGM)** – Asked whether there was an MSCB sub-group for FGM, the Chairman of the MSCB explained that this issue could be addressed by several sub-groups, including the learning and training sub-group. Information was available to schools and consideration needed to be given to whether a more proactive approach could be adopted to raise awareness further. It was requested that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.
- **Recruitment and retention** – In response to a question about the difficulty of recruiting and retaining staff who might be attracted by higher

salaries within London, the Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services (Interim) said that Medway offered a supportive structure for social workers. Operating in small pods of four, and providing the whole system service that was favoured by social workers, enabled a good social worker to manager ratio to be achieved. The new structure had been received positively by staff and there had been an increase in the number of agency staff joining the Council as permanent employees. In addition, thirteen newly qualified social workers had recently been recruited.

- **Ending Gang and Youth Violence Peer Review** – In response to a query on the scope of this review, the Chairman of the MSCB confirmed that it included a review of issues for the whole community, including older people.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

344 Development of a Regional Adoption Agency

Discussion:

The Deputy Director, Children and Adult Services (Interim) introduced the report which outlined a proposal to develop a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) in line with Government expectations for adoption services. The aims were to improve the timeliness of the matching processes between children and adoptive parents; develop adopter recruitment and support; and increase the potential for efficiencies by sharing business processes and reducing the duplication of tasks. The Interim Deputy Director advised that, as members of the South East Adoption Consortium, Medway Council, the London Borough of Bexley and Kent County Council already shared information about children needing adoption and adopters waiting for children. It was envisaged that the three authorities working together as a RAA could initially deal with around 150 children per year and would develop the agency to reach the level of 200 children per year, in line with the Department of Education's expectation. The Interim Deputy Director further advised that all RAA's were required to involve a voluntary adoption agency partner and the three authorities would reach a collective decision on who this should be.

Members discussed the implications of operating as a RAA. In recognising that a larger RAA would increase the pool of adopters, a Member asked if this benefit would be off-set by an increase in the number of children in the RAA area waiting for adoption. In response, the Interim Deputy Director said that the RAA would offer a greater opportunity of successful matches. In response to a question about the potentially long distances between adopters and children, the Interim Deputy Director gave assurance that there was no restriction based on distance. A Member sought clarification on the governance arrangements for the RAA and was advised that all local authorities with responsibility for

children services were adoption agencies and the legal implications of the RAA would need to be clarified.

Decision:

Subject to a full business case being presented to Cabinet, the Committee:

- 1) noted the report; and
- 2) recommended Cabinet to agree in principle to entering into formal dialogue with a view to the establishment of a Regional Adoption Agency with the local authority partners London Borough of Bexley and Kent County Council.

345 Annual Update on Children's Social Care Services

Discussion:

The Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services (Interim) introduced the report which updated the Committee on the progress and developments within Children's Social Care Service and specifically in relation to the wider service Improvement Plan. The Interim Deputy Director commented on the benefits of the revised service structure; improvements in quality of practice with the aim of achieving a 'Good' Ofsted rating; and the next steps and priorities going forward.

A Member sought further information regarding the work of the Social Work Academy and also fostering allowances. The Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services (Interim) advised that a range of fostering allowances were available. It was agreed that the Committee would be provided with briefing notes on these issues.

Decision:

The Committee noted the progress made and the continued implementation of the Improvement Plan.

346 Young Persons Wellbeing Service - Service Model and High Level Specification

Discussion:

The Director of Children and Adult Services (Interim) introduced the report which provided an update to Committee members on the recent consultation process relating to a draft service model for a new Medway Young Person's Wellbeing Service. The Director advised that the proposed new service model would be commissioned on a Medway footprint rather than Kent and Medway and would reflect the commitment to improve access to the range of services available.

The Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead reported the key findings from the consultation. These identified a high degree of support for the principles of the proposed service model which aimed to provide a holistic, integrated service with a single point of access. Some adjustment had been made to reflect feedback from the consultation. This included the provisions for an open access service that enabled self-referral; web based counselling; and early support for families experiencing challenging behaviour.

Members were referred to the final service model and high level specification and the procurement timetable attached at Appendices 2 and 3 of the agenda report respectively and were invited to comment on the proposals.

Members raised a number of questions and comments, which included :-

- **CAMHS**– in response to a question on the existing CAMHS provision, the Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead advised that there would be a continuum of support with the existing tier 2 and tier 3 service being integrated into the new model.
- **Home schooled children** – the importance of gaining the trust of children and young people in order to be able to meet their emotional needs was recognised, as was the role of schools. In response to a question regarding support for children who were home schooled, the Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead highlighted the drop in advice and support service and the web based service, both of which would be available outside of the school environment.
- **Raising awareness among ethnic minority groups** – in response to a concern that certain groups might be reluctant to discuss mental health issues, the Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead agreed that the service needed to reflect the ethnicity of people in Medway and undertook to engage with ethnic minority support groups, including the Medway Ethnic Minorities Forum.
- **Improvements to the service** – in response to a range of questions, the Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead clarified that the reference to a single point of access related to an administrative rather than a geographical point of access. Replacing the current fragmented service, the new service would adopt a more integrated, holistic approach and would provide the opportunity for much stronger support for looked after children.
- **New service provision** - in response to a question on the capacity to deliver the new service, the Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead advised that the service would be commissioned from providers who would be expected to think innovatively in terms of collaboration and partnership.

Decision:

The Committee:

- 1) noted the progress made since the last report; and
- 2) recommended to Cabinet to approve the Final Service Model and High Level Specification, as attached at Appendix 2 to the agenda report.

347 Short breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities and the Local Offer

Discussion:

The Director of Children and Adult Services (Interim), introduced the report which set out proposals for offering a greater range of options for short breaks to meet the needs of all children with a disability. The Interim Partnership Commissioner, Children with Disabilities, outlined the proposals with reference to the results of a recent consultation exercise. These included direct payments; eligibility criteria; and the self assessment process.

Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included:

- **Providers** – Members considered that more information was required on short break providers. There was concern that some providers might withdraw from the service. The view was expressed that Parklands Resource Centre was under used and there was concern that Aut Even had been closed. In response the Interim Partnership Commissioner, Children with Disabilities said that it was the intention to meet with providers individually to explore the services that they could provide. Information was available on the Council's website.
- **Direct payments** – Members expressed concern that some families were not in favour of direct payments. The Interim Partnership Commissioner, Children with Disabilities stressed the importance of meeting individual families needs and said that direct payments would not be suitable in every case.

Decision:

The Committee referred the report back to identify the providers needed and to examine the idea that a part of the budget should be held centrally and that some services are provided centrally.

348 Council Plan Quarter 1 2016/17 Performance Monitoring Report

Discussion:

The Deputy Director, Children and Adults (Interim) introduced the report which summarised the performance of the directorate in Quarter 1 of year 2016-17 for the priority relevant for this Committee, 'supporting Medway's people to realise their potential'.

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A Member asked for more information about the outcomes of the 18 permanent school exclusions during this quarter. It was agreed that a briefing note would be provided.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

349 Work programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which provided the Committee with its current work programme and proposed amendments.

Decision:

The Committee agreed its work programme, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to adding:

- 1) Medway Child Health Recommissioning Project – 6 December 2016
- 2) Home to School (including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Transport Policy – date to be confirmed (possibly March 2017)
- 3) Female Genital Mutilation - date to be confirmed.

Chairman

Date:

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