

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM NO. 1, CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY, 20th OCTOBER, 2011 at 5.30 pm.

Present:-

Councillor Stewart in the Chair

Councillors MacKnight, T. Martin, Morrissey, Oliver, Scanlan and Williams together with Mr. M. Frank and Mr. K. Morris

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Tate - Chairman of Management Scrutiny Committee

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Bell and on behalf of Ms. S. Duncan and Ms. R. Elliott

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 8th September, 2011

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 8th September, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

Policy Development and Review 2011/12 : Progress Review

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the progress in relation to the policy review and related working groups, around Early Intervention, Teenage Pregnancy and the Corporate Parent.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer presented the report advising that the Committee had undertaken a visit to the Rainbow Centre in Washington on Friday 7th October, 2011 and that the key points from the visit were set out within the report. He also informed Members that an update on the work carried out at the first focus group of the Working Group into Teenage Pregnancy was included in the report which would feed into the Committee's main policy review into early intervention.

Finally, Mr. Cummings advised the Committee of two key dates for future evidence gathering, the 2nd November, 2011 and 22nd December, 2011 (tentatively). He explained that Members would be undertaking a site visit to the Bumps to Babies Group on the morning of the 2nd November, and visiting one of the city's locality based area teams at the Bunny Hill Centre in the afternoon. The 22nd December would tentatively be the date for the Expert Jury Day but this may be rearranged to an earlier date and Mr. Cummings would confirm this to Members as soon as possible.

Councillor Williams referred to paragraph 3.1 of the report and advised that the Rainbow Centre was actually named the Rainbow Family Centre and informed Members that the 40 active volunteers referred to in the first bullet point were actually based across the three centres in Washington.

Councillor Stewart informed the Committee that the first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Working Group had taken place on 17 October, 2011 and gave Members a brief update of the discussions they had had around Looked after Children and attainment. He commented that this was an area that had raised concerns for the Committee on a number of occasions and explained that a fuller report would be submitted to a future meeting but having undertaken these initial discussions some of the main concerns had been addressed.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The Committee note the progress made in relation to the policy review into early intervention; and
- (ii) The Committee note the future evidence gathering activities arranged as part of the review process.

Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board Bi-Annual Report and Business Plan Consultation

The Independent Chair of the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board submitted a report (copy circulated) to consult with the Committee about the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) Bi-Annual Report April 2009 – March 2011 and the Business Plan 2011-2013.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Jan Van Wagendonk, Independent Chair of Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB), presented the report advising that the Bi-Annual Report April 2009 – March 2011 and Business Plan 2011-2013 were currently out to consultation and

asked the Committee to consider the reports and respond to the following consultation questions:-

- Does the Bi-Annual Report provide sufficient information to understand the functions of the Board, its work over the last two years and the achievements of the SSCB?;
- Is the new format of the report accessible?;
- Do the Committee agree that the changes made to the Business Plan provide a greater focus on outcomes?; and
- Do the Committee agree with the priorities identified in the Business Plan?

He advised that the purpose of the SSCB Bi-Annual Report was to:-

- Outline progress against objective in the Business Plan 2009-2012;
- Provide information about agency commitment to safeguarding children and the Board's agenda; and
- Reflect on child protection work and performance in Sunderland.

He informed the Committee that at a meeting of the Board the previous day it had been suggested that the language used within the report be simplified and this was an issue they were taking on board when preparing the final documents.

Councillor Oliver thanked Mr. Van Wagtendonk for a very comprehensive report and referred to the issue of e-bullying and asked how this was being tackled as he was aware that the Police found it difficult to deal with. Mr. Van Wagtendonk advised that guidelines had been produced as to how to protect young people from e-bullying and the sub-committee would be taking the issue forward, including sexual exploitation as part of that work.

Councillor Williams also agreed this was a serious issue and stated that she was aware of a case whereby Northumbria Police had visited a family but then no further action had been taken and the family were left wondering what options they had next. The issue of e-bullying was of a serious nature and could be hurtful to the individual and needed to be taken account of and dealt with in the correct manner.

Councillor Williams referred to the transfer of controls to schools and in particular the safeguarding processes that would need to be adopted, Ms. Boustead advised that she was on the subgroup that monitored this issue and they had heard from a range of clubs and groups that were school based about using the Sunderland template for their safeguarding procedures to make the system as simple as possible for them to adopt.

Councillor Williams went on to ask if the cost of relevant training may potentially put any small groups or clubs at risk of being put out of business and Mr. Van Wagtendonk advised that once a group had registered with the SSCB they received free access to stage 1 of the e-learning packages.

Mr. Morris referred to paragraphs 3.8 – 3.10 of the report which highlighted that there had been significant increases in the number of children with Child Protection Plans. Mr. Van Wagtendonk confirmed that these were real increases and cases had been looked at to understand where they had come from. He explained that since recent cases, such as that of Baby Peter, people were more aware of situations and more willing to report cases where they felt there was some cause for concern. An audit had been carried out to establish if all of the cases that had come forward required a Child Protection Plan, and it had found that in the majority they did.

As a supplementary, Mr. Morris asked if the Board were happy that the increase was down to greater diligence of services and reporting rather than any other concerns or factors and was advised by Ms. Boustead that having looked into the history of some of the cases that were lasting eighteen months to two years there had been a number of issues. Firstly, if an individual had had a number of changes in their social worker it could cause delays, having too many people involved could stop the case from moving forward or sometimes they had found that there was a gap in resources, whereby individuals could be waiting for courses that were not being run at that time and therefore delaying a plan from moving on until it could be completed. She advised there were cases which had more complex issues around them and each was investigated and monitored individually.

Ms. Boustead confirmed that within the Business Plan there were actions relating to the duration of Child Protection Plans and they would be subject to robust monitoring.

Councillor Stewart referred to the top ten priorities as set out in the Business Plan and asked what criteria had been used to identify them and what issues had not met that criteria. Mr. Van Wagtendonk advised that the priorities had been agreed by the Board at a recent away day where all of the issues had been discussed. Issues such as Road Traffic Accidents had been seen not to be high, whereas Domestic Violence was an issue that resolving could have a huge impact. The Board would continue to be informed of other issues and their statutory duties were clear and would remain.

Councillor Stewart asked for clarification around the relationship between the Board and the Children's Trust and was informed by Mr. Van Wagtendonk that Sunderland had taken the decision to keep the Children's Trust and they would be in place to hold the Board to account for effective multi-agency arrangements, whilst the Board holds the Trust to account for actual practices being carried out and resources being available.

Councillor Stewart thanked Mr. Van Wagtendonk for his attendance at the meeting and commented that it was enjoyable for the Committee to hear of the SSCB's ongoing work, and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and that Members comments be included as part of the consultation process.

Annual Report on Children's Social Care Complaints and Compliments

The Children's Services Complaints Manager submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented the Annual Report on Children's Services Social Care Complaints (and Compliments) for the period April 2010 to March 2011, in accordance with Regulation 13(3) of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and provides a review of the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Beverley Boal, Childrens Services Complaints and Feedback Manager, presented the report advising that the aim was to:-

- provide information on the number and types of complaints and compliments received;
- describe how the Complaints Procedure operates and give suggestions on how this can be improved;
- indicate any significant changes which have been made following the introduction of new complaint regulations in September 2006; and
- provide information on non Social Care complaints received by the Children's Services Complaints Team.

Councillor Williams referred to the compensation amounts that had been made in 2010/2011 and asked how they were worked out. Ms. Boal advised that they went on LGO guidelines but there was not a table with a set amount to a particular issue. They would look at the previous years digests for similar cases but if a case incurred loss of earnings it was easier for them to calculate an amount. She also advised that sometimes the Council would make the decision to offer compensation as to take the complaint through the next stage of the process would cost more.

Councillor Oliver asked why a case would be unable to proceed at that time and was advised that this was generally where there was already intervention planned. Alternatively, it could be because it was a Human Resources issue rather than a complaint and needed to be passed on. Usually it tended to be where another course of action was more appropriate to take.

Councillor Stewart asked what information was fed back to the relevant line manager when it is identified that there has been an issue and a recommendation to change or address the problem is necessary. Ms. Boal advised that in these instances an action plan was drawn up, advising who it was expected should be responsible for it. This action plan was considered at SMT meetings and was RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated so it clearly identified what stage any action was at. The actions were not removed until they were considered complete by SMT.

Following on, Councillor Stewart commented that some of the issues appeared to be fairly serious, and Ms. Boustead advised that where this was the case it would be submitted to the Safeguarding Management Team and discussed, before being forwarded to the relevant Manager. She advised that concerns were taken seriously and if it was felt necessary to take disciplinary action then it would be.

Ms. Boal also advised that they now worked hand in hand with Data Protection Officers and Human Resources who they could refer to for their knowledge and understanding of matters.

Councillor Stewart commented that he was interested to know what level of seniority dealt with and monitored issues and was advised that it came from the Head of Service, Ms. Boustead down to the relevant Managers.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Boal for her report, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the annual report be accepted; and
- (ii) the comments, suggestions and recommendations made in relation to the date included, particularly to any increased role of the Committee in the complaints process be agreed.

New Ofsted Evaluation Schedules for Schools (Section 5 Inspections) – January 2012

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) advising that Mr. Chris Campbell, Secondary Support and Intervention Officer and Mr. Mike Foster, Deputy Executive Director of Children's Services, Schools and Learning, would attend the Committee to present this item and answer questions put to them.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

The Officers gave a presentation which informed the Committee of the key elements of the 'new' Ofsted Evaluation Schedule due to be introduced in January 2012.

(for copy presentation – see original minutes)

The presentation highlighted the key changes and challenges in the schedule and related to the aims of the Children and Young People's Plan and the Sunderland Strategy.

Councillor Martin referred to the use of phonic speech in primary schools and commented that a child may have difficulties with phonics due to a medical reason. Mr. Foster advised that if there was any suspicion of a child having difficulties then the school would invite the Speech and Language Team to become involved to have dialogue with the child and assess their needs.

In response to comments from Councillor Williams regarding the proposed English Baccalaureate system being introduced to schools, Mr. Campbell advised that it would focus on the results of five core subjects and schools would be judging the best paths for their pupils and current figures would suggest that nationally only 30% of pupils would reach the English Baccalaureate target. Mr. Foster advised that the

key indicator of five grades A*-C including English and Maths would continue to be monitored and Mr. Campbell also advised that vocational qualifications would continue to be offered and recognised as alternatives for pupils. He informed Members that there was presently a review ongoing of the primary school curriculum provision and the findings of the review could be distributed to the Committee once they were published.

Councillor Williams asked if those schools that were currently recognised as 'outstanding' by Ofsted would need to be reassessed following the introduction of the new schedules and was advised that at present they only had this draft guidance so would not know until further information was received from Ofsted. He advised that as soon as any further information was received he would distribute it to Members of the Committee.

Councillor Williams then referred to the publishing of Parent View on the Ofsted website and commented that parents would only tend to use the site when they had complaints as people rarely went out of their way to compliment a service they had received and hoped that this was taken into account. Mr. Foster agreed that the site would need to have some form of regulating as a single complaint from one parent or a number of complaints from one parent should be passed to the authority to deal with. From his understanding it would require a group of parents with similar issues regarding one school to trigger concerns with Ofsted.

Councillor Oliver sought clarification on what would be considered under the judgments against pupils' behaviour and safety around school and was advised that part of the inspectors schedule now include a walk around the school premises, engaging with pupils and asking their views and opinions on issues. Mr. Campbell also advised that one of the other changes would see inspectors focussing on the behaviour of pupils in classrooms and how well children manage their own learning in lessons compared with others.

Councillor Oliver referred to the fact that a school could only be judged outstanding if teaching was judged to be outstanding and asked what else, if anything would need to be taken into account. Mr. Campbell advised that there was not a sufficient level of detail yet around how judgements would be made but he expected schools would need to excel in areas such as high attainment and all children making good or outstanding progress.

Schools that were now judged inadequate (notice to improve or special measures) would receive an inspection within 4-6 weeks and Councillor Scanlan asked the Officers if they felt this timescale was a realistic amount of time for any improvements to be visible. Mr. Campbell advised that this visit would be similar to the current monitoring visits Ofsted made rather than a further inspection. It would enable the inspectors to see that the School had begun to take rapid steps towards improving those areas where they were required to.

In response to comments from Councillor Oliver regarding pupils being judged against value added measures rather than contextual value added measures, Mr. Foster advised that the context that was being put forward as really mattering was why a school/pupil was not performing, rather than if individuals are at a

disadvantage due to their background. Mr. Foster informed Members that there were schools in deprived areas of Sunderland that were outperforming others and explained that they were currently working between schools to build an improvement model to identify how and why some schools were performing well and identify lessons and models of best practice that could be shared.

The Chairman having thanked the Officers for a very interesting report and presentation, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the content of the report and presentation be received and noted.

Work Programme 2011-12

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) appending the current work programme for the Committee's information.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the information contained within the work programme be received and noted and reports be added, with the agreement of the Chairman, as discussed during the meeting.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st October, 2011 to 31st January, 2012

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st October, 2011 – 31st January, 2012.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, having presented the report, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st October, 2011 to 31st January, 2012 be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) P. STEWART,
Chairman.