

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

Meeting to be held in City Hall, (Council Chamber) on Thursday 7th
September 2023 at 5.30 p.m.

Membership

Cllrs Chapman, Crosby, Curtis, Dunn, Gibson (Vice Chair), Guy (Chair), McDonough, Samuels,
P. Smith, D. Snowdon, D.E. Snowdon, Thornton

Co-opted Members – Mrs. A. Blakey

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E. WAUGH,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance,
Civic Centre,
SUNDERLAND.

30th August 2023

Item 2

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CITY HALL on THURSDAY 6th JULY 2023 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Guy in the Chair

Councillors Crosby, Curtis, Dunn, PWL Gibson, Samuels, and P. Smith together with Mrs A. Blakey.

Also in attendance:-

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Smart Cities & Enabling Services.

Ms. Stacey Hodgkinson, Service Manager, CIRT Performance Customer Feedback & Planning, TfC

Mr Simon Marshall, Director of Education, TfC.

Ms Majella McCarthy, Director of Children's Social Care, TfC

Mr. David Noon, Principal Governance Services Officer, Smart Cities & Enabling Services.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Cllrs Chapman, McDonaugh, D. Snowdon and D.E. Snowdon.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 30th March 2023

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 30th March 2023 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Cllr Dunn in the list of those present.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

North East Pathfinder – Foster North East

Ms Majella McCarthy, Director of Children's Social Care, Together for Children, presented a report (copy circulated) in respect of the above matter. To compliment the report Ms McCarthy provided the Committee with a comprehensive powerpoint presentation which explained the background to the development of the pathfinder, the DfE's financial contribution, the aims of Forster North East in creating a package of intervention to boost foster carer numbers, the development of a new case management system, together with the structure of the Pathfinder and its governance arrangements.

(for copy report / presentation – see original minutes)

The Chair thanked Ms McCarthy for her presentation and invited questions and comments from Members.

Councillor Curtis asked if there was any ‘pre training’ or a buddy system for people interested in fostering prior to making a formal application, and also what were the main issues in relation to recruitment and retention? Ms McCarthy replied that training would only take place once a formal application had been made, however there were lots of regional recruitment events and information available on the hub to encourage prospective applicants to take that step. With regard to recruitment the main issue was overcoming misconceptions about who can foster, the different fostering options, the support available and time constraints. Communication was the key to overcoming the misconceptions and central to this were events like the Fostering Awards where foster carers talked positively about their experiences. Retention was less of an issue. Once recruited foster carers tended to remain in the role. The main reason for people leaving the service was old age and retirement.

Councillor Curtis was pleased to note that having a disability would no longer automatically preclude someone from becoming a foster carer.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Dunn regarding whether there were any groups that were particularly difficult to foster, Ms McCarthy advised that they tended to be teenagers, young children that had suffered trauma or a child that needed to be fostered as an ‘only child’.

Councillor Samuels asked how long would the pilot last and how would it be assessed? Ms McCarthy advised that the DfE funding was for an initial 6 months. If it could be evidenced that the pathfinder was working well, the aim was to establish it as a sustainable model. Ms McCarthy stated that she would be happy to bring an update report back to the Committee in due course.

There being no further questions for Ms McCarthy, the Chair thanked her for her attendance and commended the work of the Mocking Bird staff and the wrap around support that they provided:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Together for Children - Customer Feedback Annual Report

The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with information relating to the compliments and complaints received by Together for Children during the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Stacy Hodgkinson, Service Manager presented the report highlighting the processes involved together with any trends or themes arising and addressed questions and comments from Members thereon.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Crosby regarding previous problems in recruiting to the section, Ms Hodgkinson advised that the section was now fully staffed. The previous issue had been the difficulty in recruiting to the position of the 'Independent Person' however this had now been addressed.

Councillor Dunn asked if young people were made aware of how they were able to register a complaint. Ms Hodgkinson confirmed that they were and that complaints could be made via the Mind of My Own App, their social worker or foster carer. Information on how to make a complaint was clearly available on the TfC website.

Councillor Gibson referred to the table of initial contacts detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the report and asked if there was a reason for the increased number of contacts in quarter 4. Ms Hodgkinson replied that she had asked the same question herself, but it appeared that nothing specific could be identified. Mr Marshall added that the majority of complaints tended to arrive during periods of transition.

Councillor Gibson stated that it was clear from the tables in paragraphs 6 and 7 that the percentage of complaints was greater for the Corporate side than for the Social Care side and asked if there was a particular reason. Mr Marshall replied that it related to an increase in complaints regarding the SEND Team. The last year had seen a 30% increase in the number of children with EHCPs in the City. It was a challenging issue for the Team and was very resource intensive. The main problem was that the service was unable to grow quickly enough to tackle such increases year on year. As a result, timeliness in dealing with applications worsened and complaints increased. He added that perhaps the 30% increase could be a key line of enquiry for the Committee. The one positive side of the increase was that it provided a stress test of the system and was useful in any review process. The Chair replied that was the reason he felt it was important to include the report at the Committee's first meeting of the municipal year, as it helped identify the issues it faced.

Councillor Gibson referred to paragraph 8.8 and stated that a numerical breakdown of each complaint would have been useful. In reply, Ms Hodgkinson advised that each bullet point related to only a single complaint.

Having fully considered the report and there being no further questions or comments, the Chairman thanked Ms. Hodgkinson for her presentation and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

Annual Work Programme 2023/24

The Scrutiny, Mayoral and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed members on the developed of the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2023/24 and appended a copy of the draft programme for Members' consideration.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

The Chair advised that the space on the programme for the September meeting had been left blank to allow for an item on 'The Future Provision of Short Breaks'. Councillor Dunn referred to email conversations he'd had with the Chair and said

that what he had wanted the Committee to look at specifically was the decision-making process that had ultimately led to the closure of Grace House. He asked if it would be possible to invite officers involved in the process to the meeting so it could be established how we got to that point.

The Chair replied that he saw the focus of the item as being to make sure appropriate respite care provision was in place moving forward and to ensure that there would be support available for the families affected by the closure of Grace House.

Councillor Dunn concurred regarding the importance of this but believed it was still important that the Committee was able to scrutinise the decision-making process leading to the closure. Councillor Samuels spoke in support of Councillor Dunn's request. The Chair replied that it was something he did not feel comfortable committing to, given the likely confidential nature of many of the issues involved and that he was still awaiting further advice from TfC and Legal Services. He informed the Committee that he would be meeting with Jill Colbert and Legal shortly and that he would advise members of the outcome prior to the September meeting.'

Councillor P. Smith having stated that she had asked that the Committee was able to consider the issues around vaping, Mr Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, replied that it would be scheduled in as part of the Public Health item.

Mr Diamond having sought volunteers to sit on the potential task and finish groups in relation to the 'Impact of Covid on Early years' and 'The City's vocational education offer' it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny, Mayoral and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from the 14th June, 2023.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

The Committee was advised that if Members had any issues to raise or required further detail on any of the items included in the notice, (that were within the purview of the Committee), they should contact Mr Diamond, Scrutiny Officer for initial assistance.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Crosby regarding item 230526/813 – ('To commission the Child Vision Screening Programme), Mr Diamond advised that he would seek further information on Councillor Crosby's behalf and report back.

6. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

There being no further items of business, the Chairman closed the meeting having thanked members and officers for their attendance and contributions.

(Signed) L. GUY,
Chairman.

Item 4

CHILDREN EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 7 SEPTEMBER 2023

FUTURE PROVISION OF THE SHORT BREAKS SERVICE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN SERVICES

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the future plans with regard to the provision of overnight short breaks for children with complex and additional needs in the city.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its last meeting, the Committee agreed to receive an update on plans for future provision, following the end of the agreement between SCAS and Grace House to provide the short breaks service.

3 Current Position

- 3.1 Jill Colbert (Director of Children's Services) and Majella McCarthy (Director of Children's Social Care) will provide a presentation on the plans moving forward to provide alternative care for children with complex and additional needs.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the presentation.

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 7 SEPTEMBER 2023

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023-2024

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT COORDINATOR

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report sets out for members' consideration the work programme of the Committee for the 2023/24 municipal year.

2. Background

- 2.1 The work programme is designed to set out the key issues to be addressed by the Committee during the year and provide it with a timetable of work. The Committee itself is responsible for setting its own work programme, subject to the coordinating role of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.
- 2.2 The work programme is intended to be a working document which Committee can develop throughout the year, allowing it to maintain an overview of work planned and undertaken during the Council year.
- 2.3 In order to ensure that the Committee is able to undertake all of its business and respond to emerging issues, there will be scope for additional meetings or visits not detailed in the work programme.
- 2.4 In delivering its work programme the Committee will support the Council in achieving its corporate outcomes.

3. Current position

- 3.1 The current work programme is attached as an appendix to this report.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The work programme is intended to be a flexible mechanism for managing the work of the Committee in 2023-24.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members note the information contained in the work programme.

Contact: Gillian Robinson, Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator

REASON FOR INCLUSION	8 JUNE 23 (INFORMAL MEETING)	6 JULY 23	7 SEPT 23	6 OCT 23	2 NOV 23	30 NOV 23	11 JAN 24	1 FEB 24	29 FEB 24	18 APRIL 23
Policy Framework/ Cabinet Referrals and Responses										Scrutiny Annual Report – 23/24
Scrutiny Business	Work Programme 2023/24	Fostering Pathfinder (Majella McCarthy)	Future Provision of Short Breaks Service (Jill Colbert)	Joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to children and families who need help Asylum Seekers - support available for children and their families (Sharon Wills)	SEND – Update (Pamela Robertson) SEND Educational Attainment	Sunderland Healthy Related Behaviour Study Report (Jennifer Green/Ryan Houghton)	Early Help Update (Karen Davison)	Child and Adolescent Mental Health	Schools Absence Update (Simon Marshall) School Attainment Update (Simon Marshall)	Adult Skills (Jill Colbert)
Performance / Service Improvement		Children Services Customer Feedback – Annual Report (Stacey Hodgkinson)		TfC Meaningful Measures Performance Report (Jill Colbert/Stacey Hodgkinson)		Children Services Customer Feedback (Stacey Hodgkinson)	TfC Meaningful Measures Performance Report (Jill Colbert/Stacey Hodgkinson)			TfC Meaningful Measures Performance Report (Stacey Hodgkinson)
Consultation / Awareness Raising		Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme	

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF KEY DECISIONS

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Holding the Executive to account is one of the main functions of Scrutiny. One of the ways that this can be achieved is by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive (as outlined in the Notice of Key Decisions) and deciding whether Scrutiny can add value in advance of the decision being made. This does not negate Non-Executive Members ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.
- 2.2 To this end, the most recent version of the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions is included on the agenda of this Committee. The Notice of Key Decisions is attached marked **Appendix 1**.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 In considering the Notice of Key Decisions, Members are asked to consider only those issues where the Scrutiny Committee or relevant Scrutiny Panel could make a contribution which would add value prior to the decision being taken.
- 3.2 In the event of Members having any queries that cannot be dealt with directly in the meeting, a response will be sought from the relevant Directorate.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 To consider the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet Agenda
-

Notice is given of the following proposed Key Decisions (whether proposed to be taken in public or in private) and of Executive Decisions including key decisions) intended to be considered in a private meeting: -

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
221006/744	To approve in principle the establishment of a new police led Road Safety Partnership (Northumbria Road Safety Partnership) embracing the Northumbria Force Area.	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210709/612	To authorise the Executive Director of City Development to deliver the Washington F-Pit Museum Heritage Visitor Centre and Albany Park Improvement project, including the procurement of consultants and contractors.	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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220207/690	To approve the sale of the former Alex Smiles site and to undertake required remedial works.	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
220524/714	To agree to the grant of an option to sell property at Richmond Street, Sheepfolds, Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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220712/722	To seek agreement to the proposed development strategy of the Council's Self and Custom Build Sites.	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
220719/723	To seek approval for the acquisition of Property at Crowtree Road and to grant a lease of the former Crowtree Leisure Centre.	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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221110/753	To seek approval for the Disposal of an Industrial Property in Washington.	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
230130/778	To approve the Financial and Lease Agreement details for the New Sunderland Eye Infirmary on Riverside.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 1 September – 31 December 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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230428/799	To seek approval for Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2023 - 2030	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	N	N/A	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
230522/808	To approve the adoption of revised Local Wildlife Site boundaries and designations	Cabinet	Y	September – December 2023	N	N/A	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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230622/821	Decision on the variation to the provision of Domestic Abuse Support Service – Funded via the New Burdens Grant (DLUHC)	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
230710/822	To approve the Feed and Food Law Service Plan 2023-2025	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	N		Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
230713/823	To consider recommendations in relation to car parking charges and Free After 3 arrangements.	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	N		Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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230717/824	To agree the delivery of Major Flooding Schemes	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	N		Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
230717/825	To authorise the award of grant funding to a maximum sum of £100,000 to the BID for a programme of City Centre Events to be agreed by the Executive Director of City Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Vibrant City and the Director of Finance.	Cabinet	Y	7 September 2023	N		Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
230717/826	To seek approval to publish the 2022/2023 Low Carbon Annual Report	Cabinet	Y	During the period 1 September – 31 December 2023	N		Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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230717/827	To receive an update on the preparation of the Sunderland Development Plan	Cabinet	Y	During the period 1 September – 31 December 2023	N		Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
230718/828	To agree to enter into Inter-Authority Agreement regarding North East Screen Industries Partnership	Cabinet	Yes	During the period 1 September – 31 October 2023	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk
230721/829	To seek approval to procure care and support services that enable people to live independently at home.	Cabinet	Yes	During the period 1 September – 31 October 2023	N	N/A	Cabinet Report	Governance Services City Hall Plater Way Sunderland SR1 3AA committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Note; Some of the documents listed may not be available if they are subject to an exemption, prohibition or restriction on disclosure.

Further documents relevant to the matters to be decided can be submitted to the decision-maker. If you wish to request details of those documents (if any) as they become available, or to submit representations about a proposal to hold a meeting in private, you should contact Governance Services at the address below.

Subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure, copies of documents submitted to the decision-maker can also be obtained from the Governance Services team City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, or by email to committees@sunderland.gov.uk

***Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker and requests for details of these documents should be submitted to Governance Services at the address given above.**

Who will decide;

Councillor Graeme Miller – Leader; Councillor Claire Rowntree – Deputy Leader & Clean Green City; Councillor Paul Stewart - Cabinet Secretary; Councillor Kelly Chequer – Healthy City; Councillor Kevin Johnston – Dynamic City; Councillor John Price – Vibrant City; Councillor Linda Williams – Children, Education and Skills.

This is the membership of Cabinet as at the date of this notice. Any changes will be specified on a supplementary notice.

Elaine Waugh,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance

9 August 2023