

## **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 3 January 2017**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Sameem Ali, Collins, Madeleine Monaghan, Reeves [CYP/16/60 – CYP/16/62], Stone and Taylor

#### Co-opted Voting Members:

Mrs J Miles, Representative of the Diocese of Salford

#### Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Ms J Gudgeon, Primary sector teacher representative

Councillor S Newman, Executive Member for Children's Services

Councillor Flanagan, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

Charlotte Smith, petition organiser

#### **Apologies:**

Councillors Hewitson and K Simcock

Ms M Neall, Parent governor representative

Mr L Duffy, Secondary sector teacher representative

#### **CYP/17/01                      Minutes**

A member reported that the Committee had not received the information requested at the previous meeting on the number of schools participating in the Healthy Schools Programme. The Director of Education and Skills assured members that they would be provided with this information.

#### **Decision**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016.

#### **CYP/17/02                      Financial Settlement**

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources provided an overview of the financial settlement from the national government, highlighting concerns that the funding received for adult social care was insufficient and reporting that the government had advised that local authorities could raise additional funding for this through an increase in council tax of up to 6%. He advised members of the next steps in the budget-setting process, reporting that, following the public consultation period, the Executive would put forward draft budget proposals which would be considered by the Committee at their 31 January meeting.

The Chair reported that Charlotte Smith had presented a petition on the budget savings option for school crossing patrols to the meeting, which would be considered

as part of the budget consultation. She invited Ms Smith to attend the Committee at its 31 January meeting when the budget proposals were being considered.

The Executive Member for Children's Services reported that a consultation was taking place on the proposed schools national funding formula. She informed members that, if the proposed formula was introduced, Manchester schools would suffer a significant cut in funding, advising that the city would be one of the 10 worst affected areas in the country. She expressed concern that the proposed formula did not reflect issues such as the number of children with special needs, the number who spoke English as an additional language and the social and family issues affecting some pupils. She advised that the Schools Forum and the Council would respond to the consultation and recommended that individual schools respond to it as well.

The Director of Education and Skills advised that the new formula would be introduced from 2018/2019, subject to the outcome of the consultation, and that almost every school in Manchester would lose funding year on year. He informed members that until 2020 a minimum funding guarantee would be in place so that the maximum reduction would 1.5% per pupil per year but, beyond that period, the budget reductions would be even more significant, if no further protection was put in place. He also reported that there was a continued pressure on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, which would not increase in line with pupil numbers in 2017/2018. The Chair expressed concern that reductions in school funding could result in teaching assistant posts being reduced which, she advised, would have the most significant impact on support for pupils with Special Educational Needs.

## **Decision**

To note the oral report.

### **CYP/17/03                    Post Ofsted Improvement Plan Update: Children's Services Single Service Plan**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services which provided an overview of the Single Service Plan, the four-year plan for the whole of Children's Services. The report set out its key elements and how progress would be monitored by the Children's Management Team. The Single Service Plan 2016-2020 was appended to the report. The Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services introduced the report across its main themes.

The Executive Member for Children's Services advised members that the Children and Young People's Plan, which the Committee had considered at its October 2016 meeting, had set out what the Council, along with its partners, wanted to achieve for its children and young people, whereas the Single Service Plan was a detailed overarching plan which set out how this would be achieved.

In response to a member's question, the Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services reported that social workers' caseloads had reduced considerably. He informed the Committee that newly qualified social workers now had an average caseload of 18 and that the aim was to reduce this to 15. He reported that the

average caseload for experienced social workers was 19.5, with a target of 18. He advised that this target should be achieved as a result of the investment in additional social work staff. He advised that the service was also monitoring outliers (social workers with unusually high caseloads). He further outlined other work to improve conditions for social workers and enable them to work more effectively, including improving the office environment and ensuring that they had regular supervision meetings.

The Chair advised that it was important to ensure that social workers had the necessary equipment for mobile working. She acknowledged that caseloads had improved and advised that she had visited social work teams in North Manchester. Following the Committee's previous recommendation that a North Manchester Subgroup be established, she advised that this issue would now be taken forward by North Manchester councillors. She also advised that, following the recommendation that a Youth Justice Task and Finish Group be established, it had been agreed that the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee would consider a report on Youth Justice at a future meeting and then decide whether to establish a Task and Finish Group. She also advised that the Corporate Parenting Panel regularly discussed the issue of Looked After Children in the Youth Justice System.

A member asked whether the Troubled Families Programme had had an impact in Manchester, noting that a national research report had indicated that the programme did not make a significant difference to families. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that this was within the remit of the Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing. She informed members that that it appeared the claims made about the success of the programme had been exaggerated but that, in Manchester, it had had some impact, including reducing police call-outs, reducing anti-social behaviour and improving school attendance and employment. The Chair advised that she would speak to the relevant scrutiny chair to ascertain if this issue was due to be considered at a future meeting.

In response to a member's question, the Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services reported that quality assurance work was ongoing and that the Committee would receive updates on progress in improving the quality of social work practice. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that there was some excellent quality social work practice within the city but greater consistency was needed and this was still an area for further improvement.

The Chair requested further information on the replacement of the MiCare social care software system. The Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services advised that the Council had reconsidered its plans to replace this with the MOSAIC system as it did not meet the Council's requirements. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that the Council was aiming to make a decision on a replacement for MiCare soon.

In response to comments from the Chair, the Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services advised that the Plan outlined what 'good' Children's Services would look like. He advised that the Council was involved in an ongoing improvement process, aiming to build sound evidence to demonstrate meeting the Ofsted requirements for

a 'requires improvement' judgement. From there, he reported, the Council would continue to work to improve and to build evidence of being 'good'.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

### **CYP/17/04                      Post Ofsted Improvement Plan Update: Ofsted Monitoring Visit**

The Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services reported that Ofsted had undertaken three monitoring visits over the past year, most recently in December 2016, when two of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) inspectors undertook a visit focusing on the Council's Safeguarding and Improvement Unit. He informed members that the Council had received formal feedback from the visit. He reported that the inspectors had found some good partnership working, a learning culture and improved staff morale. In addition, the inspectors reported that staff now had more manageable caseloads and that they understood that they needed to improve their practice, now that they had more capacity to do so. He advised that the inspectors had highlighted inconsistency in social work practice, with some good practice and some poorer practice. He reported that the inspectors had advised that the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Chairs of the Child Protection Conferences now had a clearer understanding of their role and were making appropriate challenges. He outlined the next steps, advising that the letter confirming the findings from the visit was expected to be published at the end of the month. In response to a question from the Chair, he confirmed that the Committee would receive a further update at its 31 January meeting.

The Executive Member for Children's Services also outlined some of the positive feedback from the visit, including that the Signs of Safety social work model was working well, that there was a greater degree of challenge and escalation of cases from the IROs and that there was some good work with schools. She informed members that the inspectors had advised that audits of practice were not yet consistent enough and that there was a need for a more outcome focused approach. The Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services outlined the changes being made to improve the audit process, including updating the audit tools and ensuring that the manager and the social worker reviewed the case together and that it was used as a learning process.

The Chair reported that she had attended a meeting of the Manchester Safeguarding Children Board and had been impressed by the Chair and the Board members. She advised that the meeting had included a discussion on the importance of keeping parents involved.

In response to a member's question, the Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services assured members that the service was taking action to improve staff performance, including providing regular supervision and tackling capability issues. He also advised members that, while average caseloads were reducing, the maximum caseload held by any social worker was also reducing significantly as well.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services outlined the progress in recruiting additional social workers and team managers following the investment of an additional £10 million into the service. He advised that the Council expected to meet its target for social worker recruitment within the next couple of months but that recruiting to the team manager posts had been more challenging and some posts were being filled by agency workers at present. In response to a question from the Chair, he reported that the use of agency staff was a short-term measure and that those in post were very experienced. He advised that the Council was committed to having the best team managers and, therefore, had turned down a number of applicants.

The Committee discussed staff development, including whether existing social work staff could be developed into the team manager roles. The Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services advised that there was a clear staff development programme for social work staff throughout their career and outlined some of the learning and development opportunities available. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that work was currently taking place to develop a Social Work Academy for Greater Manchester.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services reported that the Council did not know when it would receive a full inspection visit from Ofsted but that Children's Services was continually working to ensure that it was ready for a visit.

### **Decision**

To note the oral report.

### **CYP/17/05                      Overview Report**

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve. The Chair asked members to contact her or the Committee Support Officer if they wanted to suggest any additions to the work programme.

### **Decision**

To approve the work programme.