

ITEM 4

Time commenced - 18:00

Time finished - 21:02

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSION 13 SEPTEMBER 2011

Present: Councillor Bolton (Chair)
Councillors Bailey, Campbell, F Khan, Leeming, Whitby, F Winter, Co-optees: Kirit Mistry

In attendance: Councillor Williams

Councillor Williams was absent for minute numbers 23/11 to 30/11 inclusive.

13/11 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Co-optees Alison Brown, Nasreen Iqbal and David Wilkinson.

14/11 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

15/11 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Whitby declared a personal interest in minute 24/11 as he was a foster carer for Derby City Council.

16/11 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2011

The minutes of the meeting on 12 July 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

17/11 Call-in

There were no items.

Items for Discussion

18/11 The Education of Children in Care

The commission received a presentation from Olwyn Mills, Virtual School Headteacher for Children in Care.

It was reported that the Education of Children in Care team supported schools, social workers, children's practitioners, foster carers and residential homes. The team aimed to safeguard children in care, to support corporate parents and to meet educational needs. This work would improve life chances of children and young people who were in the care of the city council, whether educated within the city boundaries, or elsewhere in the country.

The team operated as part of a multi agency system. Working with designated teachers, the team analysed data to determine appropriate intervention and inform future strategy. The team contributed to the collation and reporting of local authority performance data and delivered training to partners. The Children in Care report on SATs and GCSE results 2010-2011 was an example of the analysis undertaken by the team.

The team hoped to raise their profile and to prove that education of these vulnerable children was working.

Resolved to note the presentation.

19/11 Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services Improvement Action Plan

The commission received a report from Andrew Bunyan, the Strategic Director of Children and Young People (CYP) on the actions to be taken following the recent Ofsted inspection.

The Strategic Director confirmed that all recommendations which required immediate action had been acted upon. The majority of recommendations, which required action within three months, had been acted upon but were awaiting final confirmation pending evidence of completion. The commission was assured that recommendation number eight, which concerned Criminal Records Bureau checks and reviews, was being progressed.

The commission requested clarification in relation to recommendation number 17, namely the establishment of a Corporate Parenting Board and member training on corporate parenting. It was confirmed that a Corporate Parenting Board had been established. The first board meeting was scheduled for the 22 September 2011. Meetings would be held on a bi-monthly basis. The board would include cross-party representation and have a quorum of three. The board's terms of reference would be agreed at the first meeting. The board also intended to outline an initial 12 month programme of work at the first meeting.

The commission noted that corporate parenting training would be administered by Katie Harris, Director of Specialist Services. Three training sessions had been scheduled for the 21 September 2011.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the hard work which had been undertaken by officers following the inspection and recognised the good practice that already existed in the directorate.

The Strategic Director advised the commission that an audit action plan had been written. Performance was reviewed on a minimum quarterly basis. The directorate aspired to improve performance.

Jacqui Jensen, the Director of Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding, confirmed that a robust case management system had been implemented. An adequate case record system was utilised but could be improved.

The commission questioned whether records were kept in relation to children who migrated, for example, due to asylum. The Director confirmed that central government notified the authority of such cases. A migrant family, who came to the attention of the authority, would be assessed and supported accordingly. Records were kept of these cases.

The commission recognised that migrant families were not a static population and consequently, services and budgets were planned using national data.

The commission requested an update in relation to recommendation number seven, namely auditing children's cases where there was involvement of adult mental health services. The Strategic Director confirmed that this work had been undertaken. The officers hoped to identify a sample population of children's services and cross reference this with adult's services. This would enable them to conduct an audit of the sample.

It was reported that a meeting had been scheduled between the Strategic Director and the Health Director of the Primary Care Trust in relation to recommendation nine. The Strategic Director cited the importance of timely involvement from health professionals and appropriate engagement with schools in relation to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) issues.

The commission questioned whether training needs had been identified in relation to recommendation number 14 and reference number 1.5, namely to ensure that ethnicity and culture were fully taken into account of in assessments and in direct work with children. The Strategic Director explained that the lack of evidence, which was being recorded on the electronic records, was not providing an accurate representation of the work undertaken by officers in this field. The cumbersome nature of the electronic system caused officers to simplify their records. Officers had demonstrated that they understood the cultural needs of children. It was recognised that they needed to be reminded of the importance of recording this aspect of their work.

The commission requested an update in relation to recommendation ten and reference number 10.2, namely to develop a mechanism where views of children and young people could be collated and fed back to commissioners. Katie advised the commission that a pilot would be established to develop a free form system of attaining the views of children and young people. The directorate aspired to encourage stronger feedback from a wider spectrum.

The commission made reference to paragraph 94, on page 26 of the inspection report and expressed concern that members did not meet with the Children in Care

Council on a sufficiently regular basis. It was reported that the Corporate Parenting Board would examine the existing pledge.

The commission thanked officers for the work, which had been undertaken following the inspection.

Resolved:

A. to note the report; and

B. to request a progress report on the Improvement Action Plan to be presented to the commission in three months.

20/11 Voices in Action

The commission received a presentation from Gavin Thompson, Head of Policy, Research and Engagement.

It was reported that Voices in Action were involved in a number of projects, including a university fees debate, a consultation on core council strategy, a consultation on city centre regeneration, a taking forward perceptions campaign and the creation of a sexual exploitation leaflet. Voices in Action were also involved in analysing the views of the Children in Care Council, participating in scrutiny commissions and developing a training course designed and delivered by young people to Derby City Council staff.

The Policy, Research and Engagement team wished to strengthen existing good practice and to improve how Voices in Action operated as a feedback mechanism. The predominant challenge in meeting these aims was the lack of resource. Voices in Action required more support from experienced staff, secure funding and a large scale recruitment operation, which would draw from a variety of sources.

The commission noted Ofsted's observation that there was a lack of engagement with young people. The commission valued the contributions made by Voices in Action and felt that it was important that funding for this service continued.

Councillor Williams confirmed that funding for 2011 was in place. The funding originated from the Chief Executive's Office.

The commission wished to invite Voices in Action to future meetings and hoped to continue fostering good relations.

Councillor Williams explained that the review of Voices in Action did not differ to the review of other services within the directorate. Councillor Williams assured the commission that the Council Cabinet recognised the importance of Voices in Action and had no intention of disbanding the service.

Resolved to note the presentation.

21/11 Gang Review Update

The commission received a presentation from Karen Johnson, Director of City and Neighbourhood Partnerships and Sergeant Ben Meakin.

It was reported that Anti Social Behaviour restrictions had been utilised to unsettle gangs. The partnership recognised the need refresh their strategy, thereby ensuring its continued effectiveness. Members were invited to attend and participate in a number of workshops to redevelop the strategy. These workshops would take place in October.

The Gangs Unit operated on a multi-agency basis. Educating children was a core part of their work. The unit had undertaken presentations in all primary schools in Derby and 57 out of 59 junior schools.

The unit intended to pursue a strategy to embed their work in schools, thereby allowing them to focus on outreaching to other venues in the community. The unit aimed to further explore intergenerational work.

The unit also worked with the probation service, through the work of a prison mediator and providing advice on appropriate licence conditions.

The commission requested an update on the implementation of recommendations following the Gang Topic Review.

Resolved:

A. to note the presentation; and

B. to request an update on the implementation of recommendations, following the Gang Topic Review, at a future meeting.

22/11 Children's Centre Sustainability Update

The commission received a report from Jacqui Jensen, Director of Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding.

The Director reassured the commission that the local authority was committed to maintaining children's centres. In doing so, the service would continue to operate on a multi-agency basis, strengthening the existing structural ties. The service utilised an integrated approach, intervening as early as possible and addressing underlying issues.

Resolved to note the report.

23/11 Children and Young People Attainment Results

The commission received a report from Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Quality, Performance and Standards. The report detailed the latest Standard Assessments Tests (SATs) results.

It was reported that the department was targeting key errors and identifying areas of poor performance. The department was undertaking a pro-active approach, monitoring every pupil's performance and where necessary, challenging poor performance.

The commission expressed its surprise that the department was responsible for all outcomes across the city, including schools which had become academies.

It was reported the increase in the number of children whose second language was English, was presenting a challenge. White working class boys had also been identified as a group who were underperforming.

Andrew Bunyan, the Strategic Director of Children and Young People reassured the commission that they would focus on the 22 schools, which had been identified as poor performers. The commission was assured that a number of measures would be implemented in the forthcoming months to address the underlying issues.

Resolved:

A. to note the report; and

B. to request an update at a future meeting.

24/11 Fostering Service Report

The commission received a report from Rod Jones, Deputy Head of Regulated Service and Elene Constantinou, Head of Service for Children in Care and Registered Services. The report covered the period 1 January to 30 June 2011.

The amount of new placement referrals responded to, in paragraph 2.5 of the report, was amended to 131.

It was reported that placements which were established by agencies created a significant financial implication. Money could be saved through placements which were generated directly by the service.

The commission noted with concern that 231 enquiries about becoming foster carers had resulted in only seven applications being made to the service. Rod explained that the conversion rate was standard when compared to rates reported by other local authorities. The relatively low conversion rate could be attributed to the arduous process, which potential foster carers were subject to. Officers reassured the commission that the service was working in partnership with Derby Direct to ensure that their response to enquiries was more efficient. There had been an increase in telephone call enquiries received and initial visits undertaken in response to enquiries.

The commission questioned the benefits of requiring friends and family carers to complete the CWDC Foster Care Standards. The commission noted that only 55 of the 104 approved carers had completed the standards. The officer explained that although the standards were not originally intended to affect established carers,

Ofsted regulations required all friends and family carers to complete them. The Government had recognised that they present an onerous task to carers and was investigating alternatives.

The commission wished to encourage the service to explore a wide range of recruitment opportunities for foster carers. The commission suggested that community events such as festivals could provide a captive audience.

Councillor Bailey suggested that cross-party agreement could be sought to include a standard banner promoting fostering on the political party publications.

Resolved:

- A. to note the report;**
- B. to approve the Derby City Council Fostering Statement of Purpose, which was published in August 2011; and**
- C. to recommend that cross-party agreement is sought to include a standard banner on party publications, which promotes the Derby City Council Fostering Service and seeks recruitment of foster carers.**

25/11 Safeguarding Children: Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

The commission received a report advising them on its role and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding children from Andrew Bunyan, the Strategic Director of Children and Young People.

The Strategic Director emphasised the importance of officers across the directorates being aware of their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding children.

The commission noted their ability to scrutinise the council's arrangements for safeguarding children under section 8.1 of the Summary of Roles and Responsibilities document, which formed appendix 2 of the report.

The recommendations had been approved by the Council Cabinet.

Resolved to note the report.

26/11 Derby City Corporate Parenting Forum

The commission received a report from Andrew Bunyan, the Strategic Director of Children and Young People.

It was reported that the Corporate Parenting Forum would meet on the 22 September 2011. The terms of reference would be agreed at the first meeting of the forum.

The Strategic Director informed the commission that the forum would operate on a multi-agency basis with representations being provided from across council. The forum aimed to act as a mechanism to broaden the brief of corporate parenting and improve outcomes for children and young people in the city of Derby.

The commission noted and supported the provision of the elected members training and development programme which was planned for 2011/12.

The Chair referred to a meeting between herself, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer and the Strategic Director of Children and Young People. The operation of the forum was discussed at the meeting, in anticipation of the report which was presented to the Council Cabinet on the 6 September 2011. The commission felt that the views of the Chair, who was acting on behalf of the commission, were not reflected in the recommendations which were presented to the Council Cabinet.

The commission's recommendation that the forum should have an independent chair was not reflected in the report. The commission expressed its concern in relation to the section 4.8 of the report, namely that the forum would be chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Young People. The Strategic Director for Children and Young People would be the Vice Chair of the forum.

The commission felt that its recommendations regarding cross-party membership, representation from young people and strengthening scrutiny arrangements were not sufficiently reflected in the report, the minutes or the webcast of the Council Cabinet meeting.

The commission considered their responsibility to scrutinise the council's arrangements for safeguarding children under section 8.1 of the Summary of Roles and Responsibilities document.

The commission deemed that the scrutiny element provided for under the forum was inadequate. The commission felt that its duty under section 8.1 would be best fulfilled through the establishment of a Corporate Parenting Sub Commission.

It was reported that under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule OS2 of the Constitution, the commission could establish a sub commission, without approval from the Full Council.

The commission suggested that the sub commission's terms of reference would be agreed at the first meeting. The commission proposed that the sub commission would have cross-party representation from all members of the Children and Young People Commission.

Resolved:

A. to note the report; and

B. to establish a Corporate Parenting Sub Commission, in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule OS2.

27/11 Retrospective Scrutiny

There were no items identified for respective scrutiny by the commission.

28/11 Forward Plan

The commission noted the decision to approve the award allocations of the Children and Young People Voluntary Sector Aid Grant for 2012/13 to organisations. The commission questioned the length of time that the funding was guaranteed for. Andrew Bunyan, the Strategic Director of Children and Young People, confirmed that the grant comprised of £150,000 which was allocated on a one year basis only. The funding was not allocated for three years as it was not known whether the grant would continue beyond 12 months.

Resolved to note the Forward Plan.

29/11 Responses to any reports and enquiries of the commission

It was reported that the Council Cabinet had considered the commission's report regarding the topic review 'What was being done by Derby City Council and its partners to help children looked after with mental health issues and could these services be improved?'

The Council Cabinet had noted the conclusions and recommendations in appendix 2 of the report. The Council Cabinet agreed that a response to the topic review would be presented in November 2011.

30/11 Matters referred by the Council Cabinet

There were no matters referred by the Council Cabinet.

MINUTES END