

## Minutes

of the Meeting of

# The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel

**Thursday, 10 March 2022**

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 10.00 am

Meeting Concluded: 11.35 am

### Councillors:

P Wendy Griggs (Chairman)

P Steve Hogg (Vice Chairman)

P Marc Aplin

P Ciarán Cronnelly

Hugh Gregor

A Nicola Holland

A Huw James

P Lisa Pilgrim

Tim Snaden

P Caroline Cherry

A Mark Crosby

A Ann Harley

A Ruth Jacobs

A Richard Westwood

Vacancy

Vacancy

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

**Other Councillors in attendance:** None

**Officers in attendance:** Nicholas Brain, (Head of Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer) Michèle Chesterman (Democratic & Electoral Services Officer), Sindy Dube (Principal Accountant, Children's Services), Becky Hopkins, (Assistant Director, Children's Support & Safeguarding)

**Other persons in attendance:** None

### CAY Chairman's Welcome

1

The Chairman welcomed everyone. On behalf of the panel, she expressed best wishes and thoughts for Cllr Mark Crosby's speedy recovery.

### CAY Election of Vice-Chairman for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year (Agenda item 1)

2

**Resolved:** that the recommendation at the informal panel meeting on 30 June 2021 that Councillor Steve Hogg be elected Vice Chairman of the Children and Young People Services Policy & Scrutiny Panel for the 2021/22 Municipal Year be

endorsed.

**CAY 3 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest (Standing Order 37) (Agenda item 4)**

None

**CAY 4 Minutes and Notes (Agenda item 5)**

5.1 Formal Panel Meeting Minutes – 11 March 2021 recommended for approval as a correct record at Informal Panel meeting dated 30 June 2021 (for ratification)

5.2 Informal Panel Meeting Notes – 30 June 2021 (attached), for information.

5.3 Informal Panel Meeting Notes – 21 October 2021 (attached), for information.

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting on 11 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.

**CAY 5 Family Support and Safeguarding Update (Agenda item 7)**

The Assistant Director, Family Support and Safeguarding presented the report. An up-to-date overview of the strengths, challenges and identified areas for development within the Family Support & Safeguarding Service was given. Members were provided with highlights of what was being done well and areas which were being focussed on to continue to strengthen and improve the service offered to children and their families.

The Assistant Director, Family Support and Safeguarding highlighted strengths which included a strong member support for the children's services improvement journey with the establishment of the Corporate Parenting Panel chaired by the Executive Member, the establishment of a permanent senior leadership team, advice and challenge from the sector-led improvement partner, North Tyneside and redesign of the Front Door.

Members were informed that over the previous 12-18 months a realignment of the Senior Management Teams had taken place which had resulted in closer working relationships across the sector. In addition, Bethany Swan had been appointed to the post of Young Director. Members received reassurance that the performance information evidenced proportionate intervention with the right intervention at the right time to support children to remain in the care of their families and communities wherever possible.

With regards challenges, Members were made aware that although there had been considerable progress a strong and consistent model of practice had not yet been well embedded or consistently applied. Alongside this There was also a need to support team managers to ensure that supervision and management oversight evidenced reflection, clear direction of travel and responsive planning. Finally, developing and adopting a new QA system was highlighted as being one of the more urgent tasks.

In terms of an overview of the current position and a number of key issues were

discussed including performance information, repeat child protection plans, placement sufficiency, limited residential capacity to meet the needs North Somerset young people, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, the development of 16+ supported and independent living schemes, the percentage of 19-21 year old care leavers in education, employment and/or training and the percentage of 19-21 year old care leavers who were in suitable accommodation.

**Concluded:** that the report be received and comments be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

**CAY 6 Children's Improvement Focus Group - Front Door - Forward Plan (Agenda item 8)**

The Chairman provided an update on the CYPS Working Group addressing the Front Door and directed Member's attention to the Forward Plan and encouraged Panel attendance at the meetings which were scheduled to take place on a six-weekly basis until the end of the Municipal Year 2022/23.

The working group would focus on the child and family living experience and other agencies' experience of using the Front Door. In terms of location the meetings of the Working Group would take place virtually but also in person in the community or otherwise, as appropriate.

**Concluded** that:

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) panel members be encouraged to attend meetings of the CYPS Panel Working Group - Front Door

**CAY 7 CYPS Working Group - Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) - Terms of Reference and Forward Plan (Agenda item 9)**

The Chairman provided an update on the CYPS Working Group addressing the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) and directed Members' attention to the Terms of Reference and the Forward Plan for the working group.

Members were informed that the purpose of the working group was to identify and recommend further effective delivery of the Council SEND Improvement Plan in relation to the experiences of Parents and Carers. In terms of outcomes the aim was to ensure that parents and carers had timely, appropriate and successful experiences working with North Somerset Council and its partners. The group to make recommendations on the use of resources, to expedite the progress on removing barriers for parents and carers and to monitor progress. Meetings to take place bi-monthly, in person in the community or virtually, as appropriate.

Members were encouraged to attend the meetings of the working group.

**Concluded** that:

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) Panel members be encouraged to attend meetings of the CYPS

**CAY 8 Q3 Performance Monitoring Report (Agenda item 10)**

The Assistant Director, Family Support & Safeguarding, presented the report.

The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel received regular performance management reports to help members evaluate the extent to which the council and its partners were achieving key plans and objectives for children and young people's services, and to provide appropriate challenge and suggestions to improve performance. The report presented the standard items: any recent Ofsted inspections of council services; an analysis of the performance of the relevant Key Corporate Performance Indicators (KCPIs) for Quarter 3 2021/22, that fell under the remit of the Panel and an overview of the performance of various Key Service Measures for Support and Safeguarding services within the council.

Members asked for further information regarding the low levels of referrals to which the Assistant Director, Family Support & Safeguarding responded that the Family Wellbeing Service had been expanded and there was no evidence of children being re-referred into the service. There was confidence that the application threshold at the Front Door was consistent and there was confidence that support was in the right place and was being monitored.

A discussion took place on missing children and missing episodes and the fact that there was no real national picture of children who never attended school. The question was asked as to the quality of data available. It was noted that Education colleagues were included in the weekly Front Door meetings. The Assistant Director, Family, Support & Safeguarding to refer the query to the Assistant Director, Education Partnerships to respond.

Members also queried the fact that the abuse or neglected percentage (page 11) was usually around 40-43% and whether the figure could be improved. It was noted that the service was aiming to reduce neglect by early help support. In terms of the threshold this percentage would be expected even if numbers reduced.

**Concluded:** that the performance information in the report be noted and comments on both areas for improvement and areas of good performance be sent to officers in the form of minutes.

**CAY 9 CYPS Working Group - Care Leavers (NEET) - Terms of Reference and Forward Plan (Agenda item 11)**

The Chairman provided an update on the CYPS Working Group addressing Care Leavers not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) which aimed to identify barriers for care leavers in accessing education employment and training. Members' attention was drawn to the Forward Plan and their attendance was encouraged at the meetings scheduled to take place on a six-weekly basis until the end 2023 (virtually or in person, as appropriate).

The Working Group's purpose was to identify and recommend sustainable and effective delivery and creation of opportunities for all care leavers in North Somerset who were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

**Concluded** that:

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) panel members be encouraged to attend meetings of the CYPS Panel Working Group – Care Leavers NEET

**CAY 10 Joint CAMHS (CYPS & HOSP) Working Group - Overview of Findings (Agenda item 12)**

It was agreed that this item be deferred until the CYPS Panel meeting On 16 June 2022 to enable Health colleagues and other interested Councillors to attend and participate in the discussion.

**Concluded:** that the item be deferred until the next Panel meeting on 16 June 2022.

**CAY 11 Month 10 Children's Services Budget Monitor (Agenda item 13)**

The Principal Accountant, Children's Services, presented the report which summarised and discussed the 2021/22 forecast spend against budget for children's services, highlighting key variances, movements and contextual information as at Month 10.

Referring to the one-page summary sheet provided, Members were informed that Children's Services currently had a projected £798k underspend (2.9% of the net budget); this was a £284k favourable change when compared with the period 9 position.

The forecast underspend was mainly due to the spend on placements for children looked after being significantly less than the budget. This was representative of the fact that the budget was set when children looked after numbers were significantly higher than they were now, and, in addition, an allowance was made in the expectation that numbers would begin to rise once lockdown measures were eased; this had not yet materialised. Furthermore, work on reducing costs by "stepping down" young people to more appropriate and cost-effective placements was proving extremely productive. As a result of all these factors, the forecast spend was c. £1.5m less than the budget.

Members were made aware that there were further mitigations from reduced staffing costs through staff turnover / vacancy management and contributions to staffing and overheads from a number of grants from central government.

The main offsetting cost pressure was on support to families with disabled children. The growth applied in this area in the 2021/22 budget had not been sufficient to close the gap between the budget and demand in the current year, although this was being addressed as part of the MTFP and budget for 2022/23. Other cost pressures were on section 17 support (placement prevention), systems

improvement, and the SEND element of the education support services contract.

The deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant was estimated to have grown from £7.150m at the beginning of the year of £12.591m by the end of the financial year – the main overspend relating to out of area placements, top-up funding and bespoke education packages for children missing education.

**Concluded:** that the report be received and comments on the 2021/22 forecast spend against budget for children’s services and on the risks and opportunities associated with the medium-term position be forwarded to officers.

**CAY 12 Panel's Work Plan (Agenda item 14)**

Members discussed the Work Plan.

**Concluded:** that the work plan be received and updated as required.

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Chairman

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