

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 11 June 2013

Present: Councillor M Hankey(in the Chair);
Councillors M Bailey; D Cassidy; S Carter; A J Cummings; J
Daly; M James; P Heneghan; and T Tariq

Public in attendance: No members of the public were present at the
meeting.

Also in attendance: Councillor Campbell– Cabinet Member for Children and
Families

Apologies for absence: Councillor Fitzwalter, Councillor Nuttall and Councillor
O’Hanlon

OSC.107 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Heneghan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute OSC.110 below, Ofsted Inspection (SLAC) Action Plan, as the newly appointed Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Families and took no part in discussions on this item.

OSC.108 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present at the meeting to ask questions under this item.

OSC.109 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the last meeting, held on 26 March 2013, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OSC.110 OFSTED INSPECTION (SLAC) ACTION PLAN

Further to Minute OSC.276 of the meeting of this Committee, held on 28 August 2012, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families submitted a report setting out progress against the Action Plan that had been drawn up in response to the Ofsted report published on 13 June 2012.

With regard to the Action Plan, the Executive Director of Children’s Services referred to the implications arising from the revised Multi Agency Inspection Framework due to be implemented in September 2013. It was reported that the Action Plan would be developed and refreshed in light of the changes to the Inspection Framework and the Working Together 2013 guidance issued to social work practitioners.

Questions and comments were invited and the following issues were raised:

- In response to questions around the inspection process, the Cabinet Member reported that an inspection was imminent and welcomed the new Ofsted emphasis as a means of developing safe and outcome focused services for children.
- In response to a question concerning the consequences if the service was deemed to be inadequate, the Executive Director explained that the Department for Education would set up improvement arrangements and arrange for a re-inspection within a year.
- During discussion of this item, Members acknowledged the new stringent Inspection process, which had resulted in approximately one in three Council's being deemed 'Inadequate'.
- With regard to the difficulties of recruiting to Team Leader positions the Executive Director explained that comparative salary levels had been an issue and that agency staff had been used to ensure posts are filled. The Executive Director reported that the long term aim was to develop staff from within to enable them to take up management level posts.
- In response to a question relating to the adequacy of IT systems, the Executive Director reported that systems had been replaced since the last inspection, but acknowledged there was still capacity to increase the use of management reporting facilities.
- The Executive Director referred to the measures in place to safeguard looked after children and highlighted the overall aim of the Plan for Change which looks to reduce the costs of children looked after by attracting more in house foster carers. The Executive Director stressed the importance of early intervention as a means of reducing the number of looked after children overall.
- The Cabinet Member reported on the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel and explained that the terms of reference for the Panel were currently being looked at with a view to possibly developing a scrutiny function.
- During discussion of issues relating to sexual exploitation, the Executive Director highlighted the multi agency arrangements in place and referred to a piece of scoping work undertaken with Barnardo's to look at the potential for setting up of a specialised specific service or developing a shared service with other authorities.

It was agreed:

1. That this Committee notes the Working Together 2013 Guidance and the revised Ofsted Inspection Framework.
2. That, in light of (1) above, an updated and refreshed Action Plan be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee.

OSC.111 DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME 2013-2014

Leigh Webb, Principal Democratic Services Officer, submitted a report setting out the terms of reference for the Committee along with a Work Programme Prioritisation Protocol to assist members in the development of a Work Programme for 2013/2014. The report included a brief summary of the new Overview and Scrutiny structures along with the remit of the Committee, which allows for the setting up of task and finish Overview Project Groups to carry out in depth reviews into specific topics.

Members of the Committee suggested and discussed potential items for the coming year. In response to a suggestion from Councillor Daly, concerning the issue of green belt land, Councillor Cummings undertook to raise as a potential issue with the Planning Department. Leigh Webb, Democratic Services Officer, explained that Planning, as a Council function, was outside the remit of the Committee and that any considerations would have to be limited to areas general policy and avoid any issues relating to particular applications.

It was agreed:

1. That the following Performance Monitoring items be included as part of this Committee's Work Programme for 2013/14:
 - Corporate Financial Monitoring Reports
 - Corporate Plan Progress Reports

2. That Task and Finish Scrutiny Overview Project Groups be set up to look at the following topics:
 - Neighbourhood Plans - (outline scope to look at current initiatives; partnership working arrangements; and the implications of upcoming national legislation)
 - Worklessness (outline scope to include a review of the new collection arrangements; examination of problems encountered by residents; and the arrangement for dealing with issues via the customer contact centre)

3. That the following additional issues be considered by the full Committee as part of the Work Programme for 2013/2014:
 - Safeguarding Looked After Children (Action Plan)
 - Plan for Change (Cabinet Update reports)
 - Welfare Reform
 - Anti Social Behaviour – Update on recommendations
 - Recycling – Update on recommendations

COUNCILLOR M HANKEY
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.20pm)

