

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 9 September 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor Wildy, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Stephens, Vice Chair.

Councillors Delbridge, Mrs Foster, Haydon, Mrs Nicholson, Roberts, Stark and Tuohy.

Apologies for absence: Mrs Maggie Gee, Ms Alison Kearnes and Mr Kevin Willis.

Also in attendance: Claire Cordory-Oatway, Lead Officer; Giles Perritt, Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships; Tim Howes, Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance; Mairead McNeil, Assistant Director Children's Social Care; Simon Arthurs, Finance Client Manager and Karen Porte, CareFirst Project Manager.

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.10 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27. MOTION ON NOTICE

The Motion of Notice, having been proposed by Councillor Roberts and seconded by Councillor Delbridge, was withdrawn.

The Chair stated that if any panel members had any issues they wished to raise, they should not hesitate to contact herself and/or the Vice-Chair so that these could be speedily addressed.

28. MINUTES

Regarding minute 15, change Coombe Dean to Ridgeway School.

Agreed that the minutes of the 15 July 2010 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to the amendment above.

29. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed Claire Cordory-Oatway to the panel as Lead Officer.

The Chair moved the order of the items on the agenda to facilitate good management of the meeting. Agenda Item 15 School Transport to be taken after agenda item 10 Budget and Performance and agenda item 13 Carefirst to be taken after agenda item 11 Ofsted Inspection Action Plan.

30. **CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES**

The Democratic Support Officer updated the panel on the current status of co-opted representatives.

It was reported that –

- a. Alison Kearnes, NSPCC had resigned as a co-opted representative due to a change in employment;
- b. two youth representatives have been identified and would attend the next panel meeting. The Chair, a representative from the Youth Service and the panel Lead Officer would meet to discuss ways of offering structured support to youth representatives.

Agreed that the Chair, Vice-Chair, Lead Officer and Democratic Support Officer would meet to review the current status of co-opted representation on the panel with a view to securing necessary representation.

31. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The Lead Officer updated the panel on their tracking resolutions. The panel was informed that, with regard to budget scrutiny recommendations -

- a. R5.1 – Formal engagement between school governors and third sector organisations takes place over the memoranda of understanding with new schools to maximise the extent to which their facilities are available and accessible to local communities

The Lead Officer will meet with the relevant officers and proposals to come back to the panel in November;

- b. R5.2 – Plans are published for better co-ordination of 'back office' functions between Children and Young People's services and the rest of the organisation to avoid duplication and to gain efficiencies.

A new budget delivery group chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive has been set up. A progress update will be provided to the panel in November;

- c. R5.3 – Performance management arrangements between the Children's Trust and the Council's executive and scrutiny arrangements are harmonized and clarified.

Panel chairs will be invited to attend a workshop to review council and partnership governance arrangements. Chairs to be notified of date as soon as possible;

- d. R5.4 – That, in light of the poor results of the recent unannounced inspection in Children’s Services, the department responds to concerns raised over caseloads of Children’s Social Workers, resources for Foster Care and the lack of evidence of new and innovative ways of making efficiency savings in co-operation with other departments and partners;

This recommendation is no longer relevant due to budget restrictions from Government;

- e. R5.5 – The Board responsible for the improvement of the CareFirst management system clarify the key elements of the project plan with respect to children’s social care, including investment, people resources and key milestones and timelines.

This item to be discussed later in the agenda;

- f. R5.6 – Further details are provided of efficiency savings contained within the budget reduction in Lifelong Learning;

The panel to receive a budget report later in the agenda. A further detailed update will be provided to the November meeting following the Comprehensive Spending Review.;

- g. R5.7 – Scrutiny input is requested into the decision as to whether to apply for grant support for free school meals and how match funding is identified;

This recommendation is no longer relevant due to budget restrictions from Government;

- h. R5.8 – Initiatives contributing to the reduction of teenage pregnancy should be part of an overall plan, and properly highlighted to relevant stakeholders;

A Joint Task and Finish Group presented a report to Management Board on 28 July which will then go to Cabinet on 19 October. The report can be accessed at www.plymouth.gov.uk/mgInternet/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=24831

32. **QUARTERLY SCRUTINY REPORT**

The panel noted the quarterly scrutiny report, subject to changes to 3.2 to include, ‘the panel visited Riverside School where the Headteacher showed them the facilities and introduced them to some students and staff. The scrutiny meeting took place at Lipson Community College and was attended

by the Headteacher staff and students. The panel was able to participate in a comprehensive tour of the school and members were most impressed with the facilities and opportunities available'.

Agreed that -

1. the Chair would write to convey the panel's thanks to Riverside School and Lipson Community College;
2. the panel's quarterly scrutiny report be commended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, subject to the changes outlined above.

33. **YOUNG CARERS IN PLYMOUTH TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Agreed that –

1. the vice-chair would chair the task and finish group on young carers in Plymouth and the chair would act as vice-chair;
2. a list of available dates for the task and finish group to be sent to each panel member;
3. the PID be noted, subject to the changes as discussed at the meeting.

34. **BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE**

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had referred some items 'not on target' to the panel for consideration as there was a considerable overspend in this area. Simon Arthurs, Finance Client Manager and Mairead McNeil, Assistant Director Children's Social Care reported that there was an overspend due to -

- a. an increase in the number of older children coming into care. Once children were in care there was a need to continue to care for them to keep them safe,
- b. a great deal of work in developing the family support service and making families more independent and able to look after their own children was taking place.

In response to questions it was reported that -

- c. the reduction in family support was around vacancy savings and the department was using existing resources the best way possible. Some services had been reduced because these were not necessarily providing best value for money;
- d. the foster care campaign was progressing well. Quality was critical in the assessment and recruitment of foster carers due to

statutory requirements and the need to provide a suitable environment for children in our care. The department was very choosy about who we assessed and chose as foster carers. It was a national problem recruiting excellent foster carers. The City was taking a proactive approach to the recruitment but there was still a great deal of reliance on private foster carers which was far more expensive;

- e. multi systematic therapy is a pilot scheme. A therapeutic input for children on the edge of care, it involves an expensive package of psychologists and 24/7 care. This pilot has been monitored closely over the past 2 years.

35. **OFSTED INSPECTION ACTION PLAN AND CIP 7 UPDATE**

Mairead McNeil, Assistant Director Children's Social Care gave an update to the panel and presented the action plan presented to the Children's Trust.

In response to questions it was reported that -

- a. there is a shortage of social workers nationally. Newly qualified social workers take part in a longer induction programme and will not undertake more complex cases until after a year in post;
- b. there are currently 7 to 8 social worker vacancies. These vacancies are backfilled by agency work but would like to recruit permanent staff. A national advertising campaign took place prior to the summer holidays and with a further campaign imminently;
- c. social work is a stressful profession and the recruitment process has to be robust. This was not currently a major issue in Plymouth due to recruitment targets having been met;
- d. Plymouth City Council was now in the next cycle of unannounced inspections and were on standby.

Members of the Panel reported that they were impressed with the quality of work presented by social work staff to other panels.

36. **COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK UPDATE**

The panel noted the update and agreed that -

- 1. the panel received further updates on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). These updates to include an assessment of what resources may be needed to enable a faster roll-out of this programme;
- 2. the panel conveyed their thanks to Amanda Paddison, CAF Co-ordinator on the progress that has been made in that area.

37. **CAREFIRST**

Karen Porte, CareFirst Project Manager, reported that –

- a. 80 per cent of staff in place on the project;
- b. further upgrade of CareFirst software to deliver benefits to the end user and social worker on the front line for case recording;
- c. a pilot looking at remote working to take place in the near future.

The Chair commented that a written update may have been helpful.

In view of the importance of this to the service and the complexity of the presentation, the panel agreed it should receive a demonstration on CareFirst at the development session on 7 October 2010.

38. **LEGISLATIVE CHANGES**

There were no new legislative changes to report.

39. **SCHOOL TRANSPORT**

Simon Arthurs, Finance Client Manager, reported in response to questions concerning the £250,000 overspend that –

- a. the volume of children with complex needs requiring transport had attributed to the rising costs for school transport;
- b. the review of the transport plan was underway.

It was agreed that the panel would receive an updated report on the budget position in January.

40. **UPDATES FROM PARTNER ORGANISATIONS**

The panel noted the Corporate Parenting Group update. The panel wished to thank the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Group for the work that has been undertaken.

41. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel considered its work programme for 2010/11.

Agreed that the meeting of 7 October 2010 be changed to a developmental session for the panel.

42. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.