

Ambitious Plymouth

Monday 19 January 2015

PRESENT:

Councillor Bowie, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Beer, Vice Chair.

Councillors Sam Davey, Jarvis, Jordan, Sam Leaves, Parker-Delaz-Ajete, Singh and Tuohy.

Co-opted Representatives: Edith Bayley (Statutory Co-opted Representative) and Clare Hamon (Non-Statutory Co-opted Representative).

Apologies for absence: Councillor Mrs Nicholson.

Also in attendance: Carol Burgoyne (Strategic Director for People), Jayne Gorton (Lead Officer), Judith Harwood (Assistant Director for Education, Learning and Families), Councillor McDonald (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Public Health), Julie Reed (Business Manager) and Lynn Young (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.51 am.

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.

40. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Councillors in accordance with the code of conduct.

41. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2014 are confirmed as a correct record.

42. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

43. **OFSTED**

Carol Burgoyne (Strategic Director for People), Judith Harwood (Assistant Director for Education, Learning and Families) and Councillor McDonald (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Public Health), provided members with a summary of the recent OFSTED report following an inspection of services for children in need of

help and protection, looked after children and care leavers and review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The OFSTED report and a draft improvement plan were submitted.

Members were advised that –

- (a) the OFSTED report was received by the Council on 2 January and published on 5 January, and the Council was required to prepare and publish a written statement of the action it intended to take in response to the report within 70 working days of receiving it;
- (b) the OFSTED report's overall conclusion was that the Council's services for vulnerable children were now judged as 'Requiring improvement to be good';
- (c) OFSTED had found a range of strengths in Plymouth's services for vulnerable children;
- (d) key areas that the Council needed to improve included –
 - reducing high caseloads carried by social workers;
 - improving management oversight;
 - improving IT systems so that they can deliver accurate and timely data;
 - improving working practices between the Council's partners;
- (e) the report had recognised that children in the system were safe;
- (f) the Council already had plans in place to address the majority of the areas for improvement highlighted by OFSTED in the report;
- (g) the draft improvement plan included 17 areas which had been highlighted for improvement. Further investigation was required of the areas in the plan marked 'tbc';
- (h) the police, health and youth partners had all been involved in the OFSTED inspection and improvements had been identified for everybody which would require the Council and its partners to work together to achieve the outcomes identified;
- (i) staff had continued the day to day work in the People Directorate whilst the OFSTED inspection had been in progress.

In response to members' questions it was reported that –

- (j) a great deal of the work handled by Children's Services could be dealt with by outside agencies;

- (k) the ideal caseload for social workers was 18-25, although some had a caseload of between 30 and 35;
- (l) social work vacancies were closely monitored, any vacancies were covered by agency staff only when absolutely necessary. The Council had a good record of retaining social workers;
- (m) Childrens' Social Care contained a high number of experienced managers;
- (n) the Local Safeguarding Childrens' Board needed to address poor attendance by the police and GPs at their meetings, in addition to taking a more challenging approach;
- (o) the 'Staying Put' campaign enabled young people to remain in care after the age of 18;
- (p) Children's Social Care offered a range of services, and the message needed to be conveyed that there were more services available than that offered by Advice and Assessment;
- (q) discussions were taking place to identify whether the funding required for areas of improvement identified in the improvement plan was to come from existing budgets or whether additional funding needed to be approved.

The Chair thanked Carol Burgoyne, Judith Harwood and Councillor McDonald for their report.

44. **YOUTH SERVICES TRANSFORMATION UPDATE**

The panel received an update on the transformation of Youth Services.

There being no questions on the matter, the report was noted.

45. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel noted its work programme and agreed to recommend to the Co-operative Scrutiny Board that –

- (1) the 'Plymouth Plan' is added to the work programme for 30 March 2015 (as recommended by Budget Scrutiny);
- (2) 'OFSTED improvement plan' is added to the work programme for 30 March 2015;
- (3) information relating to the cost of the recent Ofsted inspection (as recommended by Budget Scrutiny) is added to the work programme;
- (4) the containment plans within Children's Social Care is added to the work programme (as recommended by Budget Scrutiny).

46. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.