

Minutes of the meeting of Children and young people scrutiny committee held at Committee Room 1 - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Monday 12 November 2018 at 10.15 am

Present: Councillor CA Gandy (Chairman)
Councillor FM Norman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: ACR Chappell, JF Johnson, MT McEvelly and SM Michael

In attendance: Councillors D Summers and ES Swinglehurst

Officers: Chris Baird, Director Children and Families (DCF); John Coleman, Statutory Scrutiny Officer; Lisa Fraser, interim Assistant Director Education Development and Skills; and Chris Jones, Strategic Business Intelligence Manager

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Butler, Mr James and Councillor Seldon.

31. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor SM Michael acted a substitute for Councillor A Seldon.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

33. MINUTES

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting of 1 October 2018 are approved as a correct record.

The Chairperson provided an update on an action from a preceding meeting of the committee to write to local leisure and cultural providers to promote the provision of a concession for looked after children. It was reported that a local theatre had agreed to provide a discount and a letter would be sent to the organisation to outline the thanks of the committee.

34. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions from members of the public were received.

35. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions from members of the council were received.

36. DENTAL HEALTH AND CHILDHOOD OBESITY SPOTLIGHT REVIEW - RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES

The committee considered a report which provided the outcomes and recommendations arising from the dental health and childhood obesity spotlight review which took place on 17 September 2018. The Chairperson introduced the report and explained that the review had brought together a wide range of organisations with responsibility for dental health and childhood obesity. It was felt that those organisations in attendance had benefitted from participating in the session which had facilitated coordination and discussions.

The committee made those comments below in the debate that followed:

Dental Health

- The discussion at the review concerning the capacity of dentists and people being turned away was raised. It had been the experience of local residents that they had been declined registration at local dentists because they had been at capacity. NHS England West Midlands had reported at the meeting that a number local dentists in Herefordshire had spare capacity. The committee agreed that an additional recommendation in the outcomes of the spotlight review to NHS England West Midlands relating to 'access to dentists', would be to: *'Investigate under-capacity at dentists in Herefordshire and reports of local residents being denied registration and responds to the children and young people scrutiny committee with detail of the outcomes of the investigation.'*
- The review had provided a very useful forum for all organisations in attendance to share details of projects underway and consider how they could coordinate priorities. This was a good template for the scrutiny committee to follow in future years.
- There was mention of the recommendation raised regarding investigation of a mobile dentist facility and the need to strengthen the recommendation to ensure a response was provided which set out the potential timescales for the introduction of a mobile service. It was felt that this could also be rolled-out to other services including hearing and sight tests. The committee agreed a clause was added to the recommendation in the outcomes of the spotlight review concerning the mobile dental service (under 'dental access centres and rurality') to recommend that NHS England West Midland *'...provide an update following investigations of a mobile dental service; and potential timescales for its introduction.'*
- The committee discussed an additional recommendation to include detail of dental care for new born babies in the 'Bounty Pack' handed to parents. The committee agreed the inclusion of an additional recommendation in the outcomes of the spotlight review: *'To recommend to Bounty the inclusion of information regarding dental care and samples of toothpaste for new-born babies in Bounty packs.'*
- The committee discussed the wording of the recommendation concerning a campaign to provide advice on foods with a high sugar content. The committee agreed that the 'sugary food advice' recommendation was amended to ask the executive to *promote* a campaign rather than undertake. The proposed change in wording would enable to executive to utilise and build on campaigns already in progress.

Childhood Obesity

- The committee discussed the prevalence of fast food outlets in deprived areas and the high incidence of childhood obesity in such areas.

- In order to address childhood obesity it was important that there was education and awareness was raised of what foods were healthy. The committee discussed the need for individuals to change to eat healthier foods and undertake greater levels of exercise. There was concern that the withdrawal of home economics from school curriculums had undermined cooking abilities which contributed toward the consumption of greater levels of convenience food. It was queried whether cooking lessons in children and family centres took place. *The Director Children and Families confirmed that he was aware of some sessions provided at children's centres to assist parents to cook healthy meals. An initiative to assist parents, in Leominster, to prepare and cook a meal had not been a success, in part because it appeared to have been a good idea but not one that had been developed with the local community who were the intended beneficiaries.*
- The prospect of a survey of parents and schools was proposed to understand the eating habits of parents and their children and to understand what cookery instruction was available in local schools. It was proposed that a survey would target three local schools and parents of children at those schools. The schools would be located; one to the North of Hereford; one to the South of Hereford; and one in a rural area. The survey should ask; what home cooked meals were provided for children; what fast food/convenience food children ate; and what cookery lessons occurred at the schools. The committee agreed the inclusion of an additional recommendation in the outcomes of the spotlight review that; *'the executive is recommended to commission a survey into the eating habits of parents and their children and the provision of cookery lessons at local schools. It is recommended that the survey targets three local schools (one to the North of Hereford; one to the South of Hereford; and one in a rural area) and asks: what home cooked meals were provided for children; what fast food/convenience food children ate; and what cookery lessons occurred at the schools.*
- The committee agreed to write to Herefordshire MPs to ask how they were championing the issue of childhood obesity and how to practically reduce it.
- The committee discussed the importance of open spaces and green infrastructure in efforts to address childhood obesity. Such areas provided recreation and leisure opportunities to help people exercise and remain healthy. The committee also discussed the provision of additional allotments to allow people to grow healthy food. The committee agreed the inclusion of an additional recommendation in the outcomes of the spotlight review that; *'the executive is recommended to safeguard green spaces as areas for people to exercise and consider the increased provision of allotments in the green infrastructure strategy.'*

The committee agreed to delegate finalisation and submission to the executive of the recommendations to the Chairperson following the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the committee agrees:

- 1) **The submission to the executive and relevant organisations of the outcomes and recommendations of the spotlight review, subject to those amendments to the recommendations outlined above;**
- 2) **the inclusion of additional recommendations, as outlined above, in the report of the spotlight review and submission to the executive and relevant organisations;**
- 3) **to write to local Herefordshire MPs to request detail as to how the priority of childhood obesity in the county is being championed; and**
- 4) **to delegate to the Chairperson the finalisation of the report of the outcomes and recommendations of the spotlight review prior to submission to the executive and relevant partners.**

37. SECTION 20 TASK AND FINISH GROUP – RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES

The committee considered a report which set out the outcomes and recommendations of the section 20 task and finish group. The chairperson introduced the report and expressed thanks to those officers who had supported the work of the group and conveyed details of a complex area of law with clarity and conciseness.

The committee supported the outcomes contained in the report and raised the points below in the discussion that followed:

- assurances had been presented which meant it was unlikely that the issues would re-occur in the future at this scale;
- officers presenting material to the task and finish group were commended for the work undertaken which put Herefordshire Council ahead of some of those local authorities now experiencing issues with the historic application of section 20;
- it was recognised that more work was required to retain and recruit social workers;
- the planned audits and the report to the audit and governance committee was supported;
- the Council was commended for the open and forthcoming manner in which it acknowledged the historic issues. The admission of past failings had allowed for constructive and speedy progress to be achieved. The new arrangements and processes had resolved existing problems and would ensure they would not be repeated in the future.

The DCF explained that issues with the application of section 20 had been significant to those children affected and there was no complacency at the Council with efforts to ensure the continued lawful use of section 20. The Council had been approached by another local authority which had experienced problems with the historic application of section 20 and had shared details of new arrangements including the threshold of care panel and performance and case management processes.

The DCF explained that the capacity of social workers was an issue and the executive had made investments to improve retention and recruitment. Recruitment was ongoing. The Cabinet Member Children and Families explained that the executive was investing in social work arrangements to enable improvements, including capacity and quality of practice. Problems with recruitment were acknowledged but programmes to increase the intake of social workers were in place at the Council.

RESOLVED: that the committee agrees the submission of the report and recommendations of the section 20 task and finish group to the executive.

38. WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW

The committee received and noted its work programme for the remainder of the 2018/19 municipal year. The Chairperson explained that the childcare sufficiency report would be circulated to members of the committee as a briefing note, the report of the outcomes of the scrutiny panel concerning the reduction of looked after children would now be reported to the budget meeting of the committee on 29 November and young carers would be invited to the meeting of the committee in Leominster on 4 March 2019.

The committee considered arrangements for an additional meeting in January 2019 to consider any alternative budgets proposed by members of the Council. It was agreed that a prospective date of Monday 28 January 2019 would be added to the calendar of committee meetings.

RESOLVED: that the committee agrees a prospective date of 28 January 2019 for the consideration of any alternative budgets proposed by members of the Council.

The meeting ended at 11.40 am

Chairman