

## **Minutes of the meeting of Children and young people scrutiny committee held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 5 August 2021 at 2.30 pm**

**Present:** Councillor Phillip Howells (chairperson)  
Councillor Jennie Hewitt (vice-chairperson)

**Councillors:** Graham Andrews, Toni Fagan, Kath Hey, Helen l'Anson and Mike Jones

**Mr Sam Pratley – education co-optee** (as a virtual attendee without voting rights)

**In attendance:** Councillor Diana Toynbee, cabinet member for children and families (virtual attendee)

**Officers:** Interim director of children and families and Acting deputy chief executive - solicitor to the council

### **13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Jim Kenyon and Mr Andy James.

### **14. OPENING REMARKS**

The cabinet member for children and families was welcomed to the meeting and it was noted her portfolio had now expanded to include young people's attainment. The cabinet member addressed the committee, highlighting the changes that had taken place in senior management in children's services directorate and new membership of the scrutiny committee. She also spoke on the improvement journey and role that the scrutiny committee would play in this.

The chairperson of the committee welcomed attendees and commented on the important work the committee had ahead, on a training programme being prepared for committee members and the need to be flexible in arrangements for future meetings.

### **15. NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

There were no named substitutes.

### **16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **17. MINUTES**

**It was resolved that the minutes of 20 May 2021 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the chairperson.**

The chairperson drew attention to two points that had been raised regarding the minutes of 1 June 2021.

Under item 8 the minutes recorded in the first bullet point that “The number of children in care in the county was slightly higher than in statistical neighbours but there could be many different reasons for this”. This had been challenged by a member of the public who felt that the difference in figures for Herefordshire from comparator authorities was significant. It was confirmed that the presenting officer had used the words ‘slightly higher’ and agreed that the minutes were therefore an accurate record of the meeting. However committee members were invited to note the scale of difference in the figures.

Under item 9 recommendation (d) should have included the words ‘and included as standard in any similar documents produced in future’ at the end. This amendment was accepted.

**It was resolved that the minutes of 1 June 2021, as amended, be approved and signed by the chairperson.**

**18. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 5 - 6)**

The question and response are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

The chairperson explained to the committee that a second public question had been deferred.

**19. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

No questions were received from members of the council.

**20. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2021 - 2022**

The committee received a presentation from the head of service for the West Mercia Youth Justice Service.

The committee discussed the report and questioned the head of service and the interim director for children and families. The debate highlighted:

- The need for wider consultation and to include the voice of the child;
- The interaction of the youth justice service with other teams, and young people themselves including regarding the transition to adulthood;
- The use of restorative justice activities;
- The reasons for the reduction in first time entrants and the use of diversionary activities;
- The required improvements in the resettlement policy, learning from examples of good practice;
- The development of the new national standards, published in 2019, and the improvement plan for the West Mercia service;
- An offer to provide a briefing session for all councillors on the work of the Youth Justice Service.

The cabinet member for children and families was invited to comment and it was noted that the plan would also be considered by Cabinet before being presented to Council for endorsement.

**Recommendations were proposed and seconded and it was unanimously resolved that:**

- (a) the committee endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2021-2022 for presentation to Council;**
- (b) a written briefing be provided on diversionary schemes and activities;**

- (c) a copy of the national standards and improvement plan be shared with the committee;**
- (d) for the 2022/23 iteration of the plan the committee recommends the inclusion of:**
  - increased evidence of consultation with young people and the wider public;**
  - evidence on staff consultation; and**
  - more information on progress on county lines, exploitation and peer on peer abuse.**

## **21. CO-OPTEE MEMBERSHIP OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The acting deputy chief executive (solicitor to the council) presented the report to the committee.

The committee discussed the report and questioned the acting deputy chief executive and the interim director for children and families. The suggestion from a member of the public to include an additional co-optee as a representative of families who were or had previously been supported by social workers was considered. Key points raised included

- The existing options available to the committee to draw on evidence from experts and lived experience;
- The role of Council in appointing standing co-optees and establishing voting rights;
- The need to process re-appointments as quickly as possible and a discussion on what the term of service of co-optees should be;
- How complaints raised through the code of conduct were dealt with;
- The recruitment process for an additional adult co-optee to represent families with experience of the care system;
- The need for safeguarding training for all members of the committee, including co-optees;
- The role of the participation officer and how the voice of the child could be incorporated in reports to the committee.

**Recommendations were proposed and seconded and it was unanimously resolved that:**

- (a) the process for the appointment of co-optees set out in appendix one be adopted;**
- (b) the process be used to appoint one representative from the teaching sector;**
- (c) the term of service of co-optees be reviewed with a view to making appointments for more than one year and up to four years, linking to the election cycle;**
- (d) the process be used to recruit an adult representative of families who are or have been supported by social workers and Council be asked to appoint an additional co-optee at its next suitable meeting;**
- (e) the induction of co-optees be more structured and include safeguarding training; and**
- (f) consideration be given to how the participatory officer could bring the voice of the child to the committee as and when needed.**

*The cabinet member for children and families left the meeting at 16:27.*

*Clr Hey left the meeting at the conclusion of this item at 16:36.*

## **22. WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW**

The committee reviewed the draft work programme for 2021/22 and discussed priorities for the following two meetings.

The agenda for the September meeting would focus on improvement work and be confirmed following the meeting of the improvement board taking place on 9 August.

The interim director for children and families advised that the annual reports from the independent reviewing officer and child protection were a priority for consideration at the October meeting. It was noted that an update on the impact of the pandemic on opportunities for school and care leavers could be delivered as a written briefing note.

A briefing session on the work of the Youth Justice Service would be arranged as part of the training offer and made available to all councillors and co-opted members of the committee.

**Recommendations were proposed and seconded and it was unanimously resolved that:**

- (a) the committee agrees the 2021/22 work programme and meeting dates as set out in appendix 1 with the amendments as discussed;**
- (b) the committee notes the updated recommendation tracker in appendix 2;**
- (c) a work programming session be held after the September 2021 meeting.**

The meeting ended at 5.05 pm

**Chairperson**

**Supplement – schedule of questions received for meeting of children and young people scrutiny committee – 5 August 2021**

**Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public**

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	F Reid, Herefordshire	Many public organisations use Experts by Experience, for example, many NHS trusts and the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care. Would the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee promote the co-opting on to the committee of a representative of families who are or have been supported by social workers at the next Annual General Council Meeting or, if possible, earlier?	Chairperson of Children’s Scrutiny
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The council is open to additional members being on the committee who are not elected members and the constitution enables this committee to co-opt a maximum of two non-voting people as and when required. As the committee has a paper on co-option at this meeting we can consider this request under item 8.</p>			

