



# Minutes

Name of meeting	<b>POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>
Date and time	<b>THURSDAY, 29 JUNE 2017</b>
Venue	<b>COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT</b>
Present	Cllrs Vanessa Churchman (Chairman), Debbie Andre, George Cameron, Karl Love, Tig Outlaw, Chris Whitehouse
Cabinet Members Present	Cllr Paul Brading
Co-opted Members	Shaun Arnold (Parent Governor Representative)
Officers Present	Stuart Ashley, Jennifer Beresford, David Hardcastle, Eric Halton, Amber James, Kathy Marriot, Brian Pope, Rachel Reynolds, Sarah Stewart, Paul Thistlewood
Apologies	Cllr John Howe

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1. [Minutes](#)

RESOLVED :

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on [23 March 2017](#) be confirmed.

2. [Declarations of Interest](#)

Cllr Debbie Andre declared a pecuniary interest as a guardian of international students at Christ the King and Node Hill colleges.

3. **Reports of the Assistant Director, Children and Families**

a) [The Journey of the Child](#)

Members received a presentation ([attached to and forming part of these minutes](#)) outlining the journey of the child through children's social care. Key points included:

- Legislation, policy and regulations/guidance governing the service:  
The Children's Act 1989 provided the framework for the current model of children's social care, the related duties/requirements and

the focus on the child's wellbeing. The 2004 act placed the duty on partners to work together to promote the wellbeing and safeguard children and created more accountability. The duty of elected members as corporate parents was highlighted.

- The services forming children's social care, their offer and statistical data:
  - Early Help
  - The "Front Door" to the service, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)  
Members were invited to visit MASH and see how the service worked.
  - Referral and Assessment (R&A)
  - Children in Need Team (CIN)
  - The Children in Care team (CIC)
  - The Disabled Children's Team (DCT)
  - Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)
  - Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
  - Fostering
  - Adoption
- The improvement journey
- Challenges faced.

Members sought reassurance that the child's voice was heard in all cases. The National Youth Advocacy service was commissioned to support all children open to the service, in care and care leavers. In addition, IRO's, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and partners provided challenge when they reviewed cases if the child's voice was not clear.

Discussion took place regarding the end of contracts. Family Centres fell under Barnardo's contract which ended in April 2018 but included the option for a three year extension. The Hampshire Partnership would end in July 2018. Officers had been asked to present a report for discussion at full council.

RESOLVED :

- (i) THAT the presentation be noted.
- (ii) THAT a visit to MASH be arranged for all committee members.

b) [Fostering Report](#)

The committee considered the report which was an update on the Isle of Wight Fostering team. Members noted that there had been a change in

management and the Interim Head of County Services had overall responsibility.

The team had achieved good outcomes in 2016 and an increased number of in house placements following the introduction of a new fee structure in May 2016 and higher marketing budget .14 fostering households had been approved in 2016 compared to just one the previous year.

Retention was considered crucial to ensure positive outcomes for children open to the service and a number of initiatives, such as skill level progression and training pathways, were outlined.

There was an established Fostering panel on the Island which met monthly. The chair would be leaving in September with the post being advertised nationally shortly.

In relation to foster carers de-registering, it was noted that in some cases it was difficult to publish reasons without making the foster carer identifiable. However, members could access this information privately.

The committee requested an update in relation to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). The Isle of Wight Council was responsible for 5 children at present but committed to taking 18 in total. The number of UASC arriving in the UK had decreased following the closure of the Dubs Amendment scheme. No further unexpected arrivals were anticipated. Portsmouth had reached agreed target and Hampshire had agreed to accept further arrivals.

The challenges to recruitment were explored including the challenges of mainland authorities and private providers recruiting heavily on the Island. Members noted that it was not always appropriate for children to be placed with a carer in their area and that the Isle of Wight had carers off Island.

Cllr Whitehouse offered to review the draft marketing strategy and it was agreed a meeting would be arranged to facilitate this.

**RESOLVED :**

- (i) THAT the report be noted.
  - (ii) THAT officers and Cllr Whitehouse meet regarding the approach to the draft marketing strategy.
- c) [Isle of Wight Adoption Service Annual Report 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017](#)

Cllr Love declared an interest as he worked for the NHS Trust.

Members reviewed the report which summarised the areas of work the team undertook and the outcomes of the adoption agency from April 2016 to March 2017.

Following joint marketing with the Fostering Team, the adoption service had dealt with 31 enquiries from individuals seeking to adopt compared to 25 the previous year. The processes for assessment following an enquiry were explained. 14 enquires did not proceed to a pre-stage visit and 3 closed due to a lack of response from the enquirer.

Members noted that two children were waiting to be placed in March 2017 and both had been placed. A single child's adoption plan had been rescinded in the period, due to a family member seeking special guardianship of the child.

In relation to Fostering to Adoption, it was noted that it should be part of the child's plan that they are adopted from the start but there was a level of uncertainty for the carers. The Adoption Team worked closely with the Children in Need teams to ensure uncertainty was minimised where possible.

The focus for 2017 included:

- Ensuring the marketing strategy for 2017 was targeted and robust to ensure sufficient adopters are available on the Island and more enquirers became potential adopters
- Addressing timescales of adoptions
- To use adoption funding to support the service

Discussion took place regarding support for the mental health needs of adopted children, their parents and carers. It was agreed there were elements of the children's mental health service delivery which needed to be challenged. Case studies from social workers would provide challenge. Looked After Children were a priority. The committee agreed they would like to revisit the Children's and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS), supported by officers.

RESOLVED :

- (i) THAT the report be noted.
- (ii) THAT CAHMS be included as an item for future consideration on the committees work plan.

## 2. **[Draft Strategic Plan for School Improvement](#)**

The committee received a presentation ([attached to and forming part of these minutes](#)) highlighting the key points in draft strategic plan for school improvement on the Isle of Wight from June 2017 to July 2021.

The four key priorities were

- Ensuring that all schools are good or better
- Building on the improvements in standards
- Ensuring schools are good for all children
- Leading a cohesive system for children based on effective partnership working

Due to the mix of schools on the Island (Local Authority, Academy and Free Schools), the role of officers was to provide facilitating leadership and form partnerships through identifying common objectives.

Safeguarding awareness is an important matter for all staff, including non-teaching staff, in Island schools. Good schools did not necessarily provide a good standard of education for all children, especially those with complex needs. "Narrowing the gap" type approaches were felt to lack ambition and there was to be a focus on raising attainment.

Teaching represented a significant proportion of schools' budgets and reassurance was sought that the quality of teaching would not be impacted by changes to funding. Members were advised it was too early to predict what would happen to the funding formula.

Activities were underway to look at how schools could make improvements affordable. These included "blind dating", looking at other school budgets and sharing how money had been spent, looking at other local authorities with similar pressures and sharing best practice.

Performance in Mathematics was discussed. Pupils' performance in areas of arithmetic is relatively strong but needs some development in terms of applying what had been learnt to real life situations. Members suggested there could be a correlation between the changes in the methodology taught to children now compared to their parents. Schools were being encouraged to share how they were teaching maths and there were a number of online resources showing methodology.

The committee were advised the draft was a public document. It had been discussed at the Island Governors Forum, would be taken to the Joint Headteachers group. The draft would be circulated following revisions and feedback was welcome.

Consideration was given to the ability of the committee to review responses submitted as the result of the consultation exercise. Although the Scrutiny Committee would be able to comment on the final report before it was discussed by Cabinet. Members believed that it would be beneficial for them to have sight of all responses, and any resultant changes to the plan, to enable them to offer any final comments prior to the Cabinet making its decision.

RESOLVED :

- (i) THAT the draft strategic plan be noted

- (ii) THAT the responses received to the draft plan, and any resultant amendments, be circulated to the committee in advance of the Cabinet making its final decision.

3. **Council's forward plan and the committee's work plan**

The committee discussed items to include on its own work plan which were:

- Term Dates. The 2018/19 dates had been agreed but could be changed until February 2018. However, it was expected no changes would be made until the 2019/20 school year following consultation (Task and finish group following consultation).
- Headline Primary School Results (Agenda item – November 2017 Meeting).
- Final results and secondary data (Agenda item - Spring term 2018).
- Future arrangements with Hampshire (Task and finish group)
- The Provision of 16-18 Education. The Island performed well in vocation qualifications but significant improvement was needed to A-level results , particularly at the higher end. (Task and Finish Group following consultation)

Scoping documents would be prepared for the committees' consideration.

Members were advised that in line with the decision to reduce the number of meetings at Full Council on 17 May 2017, the 29 September meeting would be cancelled. The next meeting would be held on 23 November 2017.

**RESOLVED :**

THAT the work plan be kept under review.

4. **Members' Question Time**

A written question had been received from Cllr Michael Lilley in relation to fire safety in school buildings following the Grenfell Tower Fire ([MQ 07-17](#)). The chairman advised the Cabinet Member had provided a written response.

CHAIRMAN