



Minutes

Name of meeting	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS
Date and Time	THURSDAY 9 DECEMBER 2021 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs R Quigley (Chairman), D Adams, C Critchison, R Downer, S Ellis, S Hendry and T Outlaw
Also Present	Cllr D Andre Stuart Ashley, Brian Pope, Paul Thistlewood and Megan Tuckwell Justine Ball (The Advocacy People), Derek Benson (IW Children's Safeguarding Board)

20. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2021 be confirmed.

21. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were received at this stage.

22. **Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum**

No public questions were received.

23. **Progress on outcomes and recommendations from previous meetings**

The chairman presented the report which provided an overview of the progress against outcomes and recommendations from previous meetings. Attention was drawn to the recommendation relating to the Annual Fostering Report and it was confirmed that no approaches had been made to the Chairman of the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care to date.

RESOLVED:

THAT the progress report be noted.

24. **IW Safeguarding Children's Board annual report**

The independent chair of the Isle of Wight Children's Safeguarding Board presented the annual report which provided an assessment of the effectiveness of agencies

across the Isle of Wight to safeguard and promote the welfare of children for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The committee noted that the safeguarding and wellbeing of children on the Island remained at the forefront of the Partnership's work, with a continued commitment to protecting children during the Covid-19 pandemic. Discussion took place regarding the success of involving both parents in learning workshops delivered in summer 2021. It was advised that nationally this varied from case-to-case dependent on particular family dynamics, and it was confirmed that a specific written update on this matter would be provided.

RESOLVED:

THAT the IW Safeguarding Children's Board annual report 2020-21 be noted.

25. **SACRE Annual report**

The committee received a presentation which provided an overview of the support available to teachers on the Isle of Wight for religious education and the implementation of the Locally Agreed Syllabus: Living Difference IV over the upcoming two school terms. Questions were raised regarding the range of faiths taught in religious education and whether any special events or celebrations were held. It was advised that the SACRE syllabus focused on depth rather than range, and it was clarified that the law states that Christianity should be taught in the main alongside other religions which would be determined locally.

RESOLVED:

THAT the SACRE annual report be noted.

26. **Ofsted July 2021 inspection on Children in Need and Child Protection Services**

The Deputy Director of Children's Services presented the findings of the Ofsted focused visit where inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for children in need and children subject to a child protection plan. The committee were provided with the headline findings in relation to social work practices, leadership and management, and the identified areas for development. Discussion took place regarding the budget 2022-23 and whether cuts to children's services could be avoided. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills confirmed that the budget prepared in respect of the children's services portfolio would not have a negative impact on the safeguarding of children. Questions were raised regarding the replacement of the current case management system and it was confirmed that the procurement process was complete, and the programme was on track to launch in summer 2022. Discussion took place regarding any barriers for development in the area identified for improvement (the quality of assessments to ensure better consideration of parental histories and previous agency involvement). With regards to workforce stability, it was confirmed that staff turnover on the Island was significantly lower than the regional and national average. Questions were raised in relation to whether anything had been highlighted locally in response to the recent safeguarding case of child Arthur. It was confirmed that there would be a national review and as agreed at the meeting in June 2021, it was reaffirmed that arrangements would be made for members of the committee to visit to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

RESOLVED:

THAT the findings of the Ofsted inspection on children in need and child protection services, be noted.

27. Performance and Budget Update

The Deputy Director of Children's Services presented the performance data in respect of children's social care for Quarter 2 2021-22. Questions were raised in relation to the level of school exclusions and whether this was high compared to elsewhere in the region. It was agreed that a review of exclusions would be carried out and reported to the committee. Discussion took place regarding referrals and clarification was provided around the way different authorities record contact and referrals. Questions were raised in relation to the long-term plans for the investment in temporary and permanent social workers made in September 2020, in response to increased demand on the service as a consequence of Covid-19. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills confirmed advised that a transformation programme was underway which aimed to enable social workers to work more effectively and to ensure is that we have got the right workforce at any given point in time to continue to provide a safe, effective, and improving service. Discussion took place regarding elective home education; whether this had increased due to Covid-19 and how the council supports those families. It was noted that a judicial review in Portsmouth on home education may have consequences for the Isle of Wight and it was agreed that a report on the matter would be presented to a future meeting of the committee.

RESOLVED:

THAT the performance and budget update be noted.

28. Committee's Work Plan

Consideration was given to the future workplan and any key issues that should be included. It was agreed that reports on school exclusions, school governor recruitment and retention, social worker recruitment and retention, and elective home education, would be added to the workplan with the dates and timings to be confirmed after the meeting. Reference was made to autism and reporting from the Youth Trust.

RESOLVED:

THAT reports on school exclusions, school governor recruitment and retention, social worker recruitment and retention, and elective home education, would be added to the workplan with the dates and timings to be confirmed after the meeting.

29. Members' Question Time

No questions were received.

CHAIRMAN