

Minutes of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 9 June 2016 at 10:00 am in the Elisabeth Room, Endeavour House, Ipswich.

Present: Councillors Graham Newman (Chairman), Sonia Barker (Vice Chairman), Nick Barber, Peter Beer, Mary Evans, John Field, Julian Flood, Bryony Rudkin and Joanna Spicer.

Statutory Co-opted members present: Mark Dunn, Rachel Gooch and Paul McIntee (Roman Catholic Diocese).

Also present: Councillor Len Jacklin and Councillor Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills

Supporting officers present: Paul Banjo (Scrutiny Officer) and Susan Cassedy (Democratic Services Officer).

1. Public Participation Session

There were no public speakers.

2. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Helen Armitage, James Crossley (substituted by Councillor Julian Flood), Councillor Penny Otton (substituted by Councillor John Field), Councillor David Ritchie and Jane Sheat (Statutory Co-opted Member).

3. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Suffolk Family Focus

At Agenda Item 5 the Committee considered a report on the Suffolk Family Focus (SFF) Programme.

The following witnesses were in attendance for this item.

Cllr Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills
Sue Cook, Corporate Director for Children and Adults

Stuart Hudson, Troubled Families' Co-Ordinator, Children and Young People's Services (CYP), Suffolk County Council (SCC)

Graham Beamish, Head of Programmes, CYP, SCC

Chris Bales, Police Community Support Officer

Phoebe Blagg, Department for Work and Pensions

Claire Hankers, Family Intervention Officer, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team, Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC)

Zoe Botten, ASB Team, SCDC
Mark Jepson, Havebury Housing

Officers and witnesses provided the Committee with a video clip and several case studies of families setting out how the programme had helped them.

Members expressed compliments about the SFF programme and the examples in the case studies, and asked questions about: timescales and ongoing support for families, funding, partnership working, mental health, early intervention, data sharing, the Payment By Results process, sharing good practice and lessons learned and employment support.

Recommendation: The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet, the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, and the Director of Children and Young People's Services, to:

- i) Commend the continued successful work of officers and partners in Phase 2 of the SFF programme, adopting a similar approach to that used for Phase 1;
- ii) Raise for the attention of the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group and the Suffolk Health & Wellbeing Board:
 - a) the challenges regarding effective collaborative sharing of multi-agency data relating to SFF, in particular NHS data, and to ensure regular progress reporting of Suffolk Family Focus to public sector leaders; and
 - b) with regard to early partnership intervention in the mental health of young people – the perception that there was insufficient capacity in the system for those viewed to be 'not yet at crisis' or who did not meet current thresholds;
- iii) Undertake focused work to look at further alignment with the findings from the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission Report;
- iv) Request an information briefing on the current work with Essex University on 'Predictive Modelling' to enable early intervention; and
- v) Look to provide further feedback and training to school Head Teachers regarding SFF good practice case studies.

Reason for recommendation:

- i) The Committee recognised the hard work of the officers and partner agencies in maintaining in Phase 2 the success achieved in Phase 1 of the SFF programme.
- ii) Officers had advised the Committee that the sharing of multi-agency data relating to SFF was still a significant challenge particularly with the NHS. Agencies were trying to overcome the issue by negotiation across agencies and reassurance with regard to data security. Key workers currently had to acquire consent from each individual family member in order to share data across agencies.

The Committee had been advised that there was a six month waiting list for children with mental health issues to receive counselling and that a child had to be at 'crisis point' before being considered. The Committee recognised the importance of identifying children with mental health problems at an early

stage and for those children to receive early support in order to avoid them reaching a crisis point.

The Committee considered that the above issues should be raised with the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group and the Suffolk Health & Wellbeing Board in order that these multi agency bodies could consider possible ways forward in addressing them.

- iii) The Committee recognised the importance of investigating further any alignment of the SFF programme with the findings from the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission Annual Report 'State of the Nation: social mobility and child poverty in Great Britain' which was published in December 2015.
- iv) The Committee was advised that £2million funding had been secured for a joint arrangement with Essex University to look at predictive modelling and to identify ways of profiling in order to identify early indications and predict when to intervene.
- v) Officers advised the Committee that more could be done to ensure the good practice cases were shared with Head Teachers and to provide further training to Head Teachers. The Committee was advised that the Council currently provided a range of services schools could buy into in order to develop skills.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None reported.

6. Making Every Intervention Count (MEIC) Update

At Agenda Item 6 the Committee considered the MEIC update.

The following witnesses were in attendance for this item.

Cllr Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills
Sue Cook, Corporate Director for Children and Adults
Stuart Hudson, Troubled Families' Co-Ordinator, CYP, SCC
David Jacobs, Head of Social Care Fieldwork, SCC
Graham Beamish, Head of Programmes, CYP, SCC

The committee was shown a video clip case study of a key worker working with a mother and her daughter.

Members praised the transformation programme and asked questions about capacity, impact on staff, recruitment, increasing number of Children in Care, costs, and young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).

Recommendation: The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Cabinet, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, and the Director of Children and Young People's Services, to:

- i) Commend the work by officers and partner organisations, as evidenced by the good results and the recent Ofsted Report;

- ii) Further improve the clarity and referencing of the helpful summary 'dashboard' that was produced for the Committee meeting;
- iii) Undertake further investigation, including geographical analysis, of the reasons why Age 16-18 NEET figures, whilst decreasing year-on-year, are higher than the national average, and what MEIC or other initiatives including 'MyGO' are focused on addressing this; and
- iv) Provide additional information about the baseline data used to derive the staff survey improvement percentages.

Reason for recommendation:

- i) The Committee recognised the hard work of the officers and partner organisations.
- ii) The Committee considered that the summary 'Dashboard' provided in the report would be of more help if printed out in colour and with clearer referencing within the graphs. Officers advised that the dashboard was intended to provide an overall snapshot and further information could be made available to the Committee.
- iii) The Committee had asked officers what could be done to further reduce the number of NEETs and considered that additional investigation, including looking into geographical variations, was necessary in order to identify the reasons why the number of Suffolk's NEETs was higher than the national average. Officers had advised that the NEET responsibility now sat within the Council's Skills Team which had developed an operating model which could compare performance between teams. The impact of these changes was however, not being seen as quickly as it had been hoped.
- iv) The Committee noted the information on the recent staff survey on page 52 of the report and the positive increases for some of the questions. In order to understand these increases the Committee wanted to be provided with the baseline data used. Officers advised that the survey referred to in the report was a mini survey and therefore would not have been the same cohort of people taking part in the previous full staff survey however a further full staff survey would be carried out in 2017.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None reported.

7. School Education Performance and Trends

At Agenda Item 7 the Committee considered the School Education Performance and Trends.

The following witnesses were in attendance for this item.

Cllr Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills
Sue Cook, Corporate Director for Children and Adults
Nikki Edwards, Assistant Director
Adrian Orr, Deputy Assistant Director

The Committee received a recently launched video on Raising the Bar.

The Committee received a brief verbal explanation about the Pupil Referral Units (PRU), noting that the RAISEonline pupil performance data is held by the referring school.

Members asked about the national rankings especially for Key Stages 2 and 4 and heard that Suffolk had improved at a faster rate than any other Local Authority in the country. Officers offered to provide the committee with further information about the new assessment system and how the ranking will be done in future.

Recommendation: The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, and the Director of Children and Young People's Services, to:

- i) Commend the efforts of all those involved, inside and outside schools, in achieving the recent improvement in educational performance in Suffolk;
- ii) Investigate and evaluate any improvement in literacy from initiatives such as provision of free dictionaries in schools, building on the recent partnership with the Educational Endowment Fund (EEF), and how awareness of this was being given to School Governors; and
- iii) To recommend to all Councillors to consider having an email 'strapline' making reference to the good educational performance of Suffolk schools, with an optional link to the newly launched Raising the Bar video.

Reason for recommendation:

- i) The Committee recognised the hard work of all those involved in achieving the recent improvements in educational performance in Suffolk.
- ii) A Committee Members advised that free dictionaries had recently been given to all pupils in the Felixstowe area and for the last 3 years in the Lowestoft area.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills informed the Committee about the partnership with the EEF which had been set up 7 years ago specifically charged with evaluating the impact and cost effectiveness of the types of teaching in schools. The partnership currently involved 120 primary schools and the rankings of these primary schools showed the partnership to be good value for money.

The Committee requested officers to investigate further on the extent these initiatives had directly resulted in improvement in literacy and also whether the School Governors at other schools had been made aware of these initiatives.

- iii) The Committee wished to look at ways councillors would be able to help promote Raising the Bar and the good educational performance of Suffolk schools.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None reported.

8. Information Bulletin

The Committee noted the information bulletin at Agenda Item 8.

9. Key Decision Forward Plan and Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Due to the meeting running over time the Committee agreed to consider its forward work programme at its next informal workshop.

10. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 2.54 pm.

Chairman