

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held at LB31-32 - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 7 January 2015 from 14.00 - 16.02

Membership

Present

Councillor Brian Parbutt (Chair)
Councillor Glyn Jenkins (Vice Chair)
Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Georgina Culley
Councillor Neghat Nawaz Khan
Councillor Ginny Klein
Councillor Thulani Molife
Councillor Anne Peach
Councillor Mohammed Saghir
Councillor Marcia Watson
Councillor Pat Ferguson
Councillor Carole-Ann Jones

Absent

Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Roger Steel

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Beverley Denby	- 3rd Sector Advocate
Assim Ishaque	- Parent Governor Representative
Councillor David Mellen	- Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Alison Michalska	- Corporate Director for Children and Adults
Paul Burnett	- Chair of Nottingham Children's Safeguarding Board
Richard Henderson	- Head of Transformation
Josie Guynan	- Strategic Planning & Performance Consultant
Councillor Emma Dewinton	- Nottingham City Councillor
Rav Kalsi	- Senior Governance Officer
Phil Wye	- Governance Officer
Tanith Davis	- Governance Officer

45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan - Leave
Councillor Roger Steel - Other Council business

46 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

47 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2014 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

48 NOTTINGHAM CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT AND PROGRESS ON ACTION PLAN ARISING FROM OFSTED INSPECTION MAY 2014

Paul Burnett, Chair of Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (NCSCB), and Alison Michalska, Corporate Director for Children and Adults delivered a presentation on the annual report of the Nottingham Children's Safeguarding Board and progress on the action plan arising from the OfSTED inspection in May 2014.

During the presentation Paul Burnett highlighted the following points in relation to the annual report of the NCSCB:

- (a) the Nottingham Children's Safeguarding Board has been a statutory function since 2006. Its purpose is to guarantee effective safeguarding of children and to make sure that the proper policies and procedures are in place for ensuring effective outcomes for children, not just from Nottingham City Council but from all agencies that work with children across the city;
- (b) the NCSCB therefore has an independent chair who has no connection to children's services in Nottingham, and a membership made up from various organisations such as health, police, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools and the voluntary sector;
- (c) the annual report outlines the NCSCB's well established governance and accountability arrangements, and that the board has been well attended by all partner agencies. Following the OfSTED inspection, a need was identified for members from Overview and Scrutiny to hear directly from the NCSCB's independent chair on safeguarding issues and other priorities of the Board;
- (d) an increase in the number of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) referrals demonstrates that there has been an improvement of early help for children in Nottingham. These referrals are now also coming from a wider range of agencies which shows better engagement, and the majority have had positive outcomes;
- (e) there has been no reduction in the number of children under child protection, which may be a concern. However, work around these children has seen an improvement with schemes such as Signs of Safety which tackle risk by providing safer environments for children. There has also been a temporary investment in the use of Independent Review Officers (IROs);
- (f) other areas identified as requiring improvement are:
 - Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
 - E-Bullying
 - Mental Health
 - Missing Children
 - Serious Case Reviews

- (g) there has been significant progress on CSE, with an improvement of risk assessments and more proactive police intervention;
- (h) there has been 1 completed serious case review reported, as well as 2 that are complete but remain unpublished at this time;
- (i) the Child Death Overview Panel reported 30 child deaths, which is an average number for comparable local authorities;
- (j) 6 areas for improvement were identified by Ofsted as requiring improvement which can be found in paragraphs 183-187 of the inspection report. Improvements and recommendations are now either complete or in progress in all these areas.

Alison Michalska, Corporate Director for children and adults highlighted the following points around progress on the action plan arising from the OfSTED inspection in May 2014:

- (k) the OfSTED report made clear that whilst no children in Nottingham are unsafe, the Council does require improvement. The Council has therefore been working closely with OfSTED since the inspection in order to make these improvements and work towards the level of 'good' rather than 'requires improvement';
- (l) the current financial climate is a challenge to these ambitions, as demands on the Council's services continue to increase. There are currently 1800 children formally in need, with a 5% increase in the number of new Children's Services referrals each month since April as well as an 11% increase in the number of Child Protection Plans. The number of children in care has also increased by 2.6% which is lower than comparable authorities, indicating successful early intervention in Nottingham. However, the cost of these children in care has increased by 11% due to more complex needs and requirements for specialist care;
- (m) there has been an increase in statutory social work. Loss of experienced social workers, and new recruitment of replacements remains a national concern. However, the Council has successfully recruited 8 newly qualified social workers through a new recruitment scheme developed in connection with both local universities;
- (n) the IT Systems used by Children's Services were heavily criticised by OfSTED and identified as contributing to a lack of social workers' capacity. A new improved records system will be implemented by September 2016. Following suggestions from OfSTED, the templates for children's plans have been simplified and made more user-friendly, and policies and procedures have been revised;
- (o) the Fostering and Adoption Service has been redesigned and a new Head of Service for Children in Care has recently been recruited;

- (p) the Virtual School is being monitored and supported to improve the education and outcomes for Looked After Children;
- (q) there are now regular meetings of directors and heads of service to report on progress and improvement, to which OfSTED are invited.

Paul Burnett, Alison Michalska and Councillor David Mellen responded to members' questions as follows:

- (r) the new IT system for Children's Services will be more robust as it will provide a single system for all strands of Children and Adults, consolidating the various systems that currently exist. There are 3 possible systems available and so a detailed tender specification has been prepared. Children's identifying numbers will be their NHS numbers, and it will include a financial recording system for care provision, including Adult Services provisions. The system will integrate with health records (as far as this is possible), and school systems. Academies cannot be forced to integrate with the systems, however it is hoped that they will do so in order to maximise child safeguarding;
- (s) the action plan of the NCSCB does have a timescale and this will be made more clear in the Board's next report, as well as outcome indicators;
- (t) improvements must be made across all agencies, not just Nottingham City Council, and the NCSCB has a role to play here in utilising its members from across all of these agencies. It challenges partners to improve their processes and aids intercommunication;
- (u) Children and Families Direct is the main point of contact for Children's Services referrals but at the moment there is no common referral form. There is a need for a universal form to be created, and for an improvement of information gathering for children who are moving from a CAF to a full plan;
- (v) the results of the OfSTED inspection were not unexpected by either Nottingham City Council or the NCSCB, but have been useful as a guide to determine which areas need the most focus for improvement;
- (w) the Council is caring better for younger children than it used to, but the needs of older children are growing ever more complex, with support required from many services such as Special Educational Needs (SEN) and mental health;
- (x) the turnover of social workers is not excessive, but there are gaps in knowledge when experienced social workers leave. The new recruits are however trained intensively and are well supported and trained by managers. Audits are used to make sure this continues;
- (y) an engagement and participation sub-group has been set up by the NCSCB, chaired by the chair of the NCSCB and with involvement from all NCSCB members. This is aimed at improving engagement with the most vulnerable children as recommended by OfSTED in paragraph 186 of their report;

RESOLVED to

- (1) **thank Paul Burnett, Alison Michalska and Councillor David Mellen for the information and request an annual update from Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board, including an update on progress made on actions arising from the OfSTED inspection in May 2014;**
- (2) **use the workshop session scheduled for Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2015 to identify more focussed topics for future Scrutiny Review Panels, as a result of actions arising from the OfSTED inspection.**

49 PROGRESS IN DELIVERING COMMITMENTS CONTAINED IN THE LABOUR MANIFESTO AND ADOPTED AS COUNCIL POLICY IN JUNE 2011

Richard Henderson, Head of Transformation presented his report on progress in delivering the commitments contained in the Labour manifesto and adopted as policy in June 2011.

During the discussion the following answers were given to members' questions:

- (a) regular quarterly meetings are held with portfolio holders and corporate directors to monitor progress on these commitments. Out of 127 commitments, 3 have not been met and are unlikely to be met before the forthcoming election in May. It is unknown whether these will form part of the next manifesto;
- (b) Nottingham is ranked 6th as a centre for shopping and so has not sustained its top 5 ranking. This is largely due to improvement of the retail offer of other cities in the region and delays in the plans for the Broadmarsh Shopping Centre;
- (c) the customer satisfaction figures in the report do not only reflect online users, but also those who took part in the citizens survey which is carried out in person;
- (d) the target for all young people to leave school with at least one qualification was very ambitious, as comparable authorities also do not achieve this. However, this should still be a target for the Council, and there are significant plans in place to address this shortcoming.

RESOLVED to

- (1) **thank Richard Henderson for the information and to note the progress made by the Council in delivering its commitments;**
- (2) **request a further update on the status of the 92 children who left school in 2014 with no formal Key Stage 4 qualifications.**

50 PROGRAMME FOR SCRUTINY

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 7.01.15

Rav Kalsi, Senior Governance Officer, introduced a report of the Head of Democratic Services setting out the overall programme and timetable for scrutiny activity during the remainder of 2014/15.

Resolved to

- (1) note the items scheduled on the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Review Panels for 2014/15;**
- (2) note that the Health Scrutiny Panel is to be renamed the Health Scrutiny Committee, and will meet on a monthly basis.**