MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 1 March 2016 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Hilary Moore (Chair), Luke Sorba (Vice-Chair), Chris Barnham, Andre Bourne, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Jonathan Slater, Alan Till, Sharon Archibald (Parent Governor Representative), Kevin Mantle (Parent Governor representative for special schools) and Monsignor N Rothon (Church Governor Representative)

APOLOGIES: Gail Exon

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Alan Hall (Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee), Councillor Paul Maslin (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Timothy Andrew (Principal Policy Officer), Tina Benjamin (Service Manager for Adoption & LAC & LCS (Looked After Children and Leaving Care Services)), Kate Bond (Head of Standards & Achievement), Ruth Holden (Principal, Bonus Pastor Catholic College) (Bonus Pastor Catholic College), Stephen Kitchman (Director of Children's Social Care), Naeema Sarkar (Service Manager, Referral and Assessment), Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People), Warwick Tomsett (Head of Targeted Services and Joint Commissioning), Sara Williams (Executive Director, Children and Young People) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2016

1.1 **RESOLVED:** That

The minutes of the meeting held on the 12 January 2016 be agreed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillor Jonathan Slater declared a personal interest in item 4 as he was the London Borough of Lewisham Mental Health Champion.

3. School Improvement including KS4 and KS5 results

3.1 Kate Bond, Head of Standards and Achievement, introduced the report to the Committee and introduced Ruth Holden, Principal at Bonus Pastor College and Chair of the Secondary Heads Group. Jackie Jones, School Improvement Officer, was also in attendance for this item. In response to questions and challenge from members of the Committee, the following key points were raised.

- Lewisham had a higher than average rate of exclusions and had therefore commissioned a review into Alternative Education Provisions (AEP) to look into this. Staff were working closely with the Pupil Referral Units to do this and they had had lots of positive engagement with schools. The findings would be closely assessed and there would be more partnership work to address the outcomes.

The Children and Young People's Select Committee would have an opportunity to scrutinise the review once completed.

- The effects of the introduction of the Progress 8 and Attainment 8 measures for monitoring school performance were still not fully known. This new measure would be introduced following the 2016 exam results. Additional information on the scoring system would be provided to the Committee.
- The Education Commission was geared towards looking at delivering a longer term vision for school improvement including looking at how schools could work together at a borough-wide level.
- The 22 percentage point improvement at Trinity Church of England School was partly down to intensive focus on intervention for individual students. They had also introduced the European Computer Driving Licence qualification option for students and a focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Although there was no longer funding available through the "most able programme" there was still a strong focus on those children's achievement and attainment. It appeared that progress of this group based on "Value Added" was only average and therefore more could be done. Children arriving in Year 7 having reached level 5 at primary should be expected to achieve As or A*s in GCSEs.
- When considering data on particular groups of children's attainment, and achievement it was important to look at an individual school level to ensure assumptions were not being made based on national trends rather than the circumstances of the particular school cohort. Although an intervention targeting a specific group such as White British Boys on Pupil Premium could be helpful, sometimes it was more important to look at an individual school/class or pupil level rather than relying on national generalisations.
- Some Lewisham schools had had particularly sharp declines in numbers of students achieving 5 A* to Cs at GCSE including English and Maths. The School Improvement team closely monitor school performance and regularly contacted schools characterised as red or amber on the performance monitoring plan. The team would call in the Governing Bodies and Senior Leadership Teams of these schools to account for their performance. Additional reviews such as faculty reviews could also be undertaken if there was a particular area highlighted as a weakness.
- The Education Commission was looking to meet with Councillors and Co-optees on the Children and Young People Select Committee. Dates had been sent round and Councillors were encouraged to sign up for one of the sessions. The findings from the Education Commission would come to Children and Young People Select Committee for scrutiny prior to going to Mayor and Cabinet. This was currently provisionally scheduled as being at their April meeting.

3.2 **RESOLVED:** That

1. The report be noted.

2. The Committee be provided with additional details on Progress 8 and Attainment 8.

3. Additional information be provided on exclusion rates and details of the Alternative Education Providers (AEP) Review be provided to the Committee.

4. Future school improvement reports include additional analysis of disadvantaged groups and of those pupils categorised as most able.

4. Ofsted Action Plan

4.1 Stephen Kitchman, Director of Children's Social Care, introduced the report and noted that there had been a meeting with Ofsted officials on 29 February 2016, where the plan received a positive response. In response to questions and challenge from members of the Select Committee, the following key points were raised:

- Clarification would be provided as to the exact number of Ofsted inspections that had taken place since the new regime and the numbers awarded in each of the categories.
- It would be helpful for members of the Committee to have a grid of questions to ask when analysing safeguarding reports.
- The Ofsted report stated that some children were waiting too long to receive support for mental health issues and clarification was sought as to why this was. The Committee heard that for Looked After Children in Lewisham, there was an effective partnership with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Funding had been granted for an outreach programme targeting looked after children (LAC). The main concern was Lewisham LAC who were outside the borough and there was a need to work more closely with CAMHS in those areas to ensure the young people received the services they needed as quickly as possible.
- Concerns were raised regarding the importance of IT improvements and whether these would be achieved on time.
- A concern was raised that the action plan did not define the governance structure adequately and that there should be more emphasis on the roles of the Political Executive and the Chief Executive in challenging performance. It was highlighted that there was a strong emphasis in the action plan on the role of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Chief Executive.

4.2 **RESOLVED:** That

1. That an opportunity for Select Committee Members to meet with front line staff be set up.

2. That a referral be made to Mayor and Cabinet recommending that Improving the IT system and software for Children's Social Care is prioritised in recognition of the strategic importance of this service and requesting that the timetable for implementation be outlined and guaranteed as soon as possible.

3. That it be noted that the Committee emphasised the importance of timely access to mental health provision and encouraged more work on this in particular in relation to looked after children located out of the borough.

4. That reports come to the Committee with robust relevant performance data to help the Committee successfully scrutinise performance.

5. That additional information or training be provided to the Committee to help them identify the right questions in relation to scrutinising child safeguarding.

5. Child Sexual Exploitation Report

5.1 Stephen Kitchman, Director of Children's Social Care and Geeta Subramaniam, Head of Crime Reduction, introduced the report to the Committee and highlighted the following key points:

- The report including an overview of the local profile and the organisations framework for addressing Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- The report also included details of the review of governance arrangements for CSE with a focus on improved partnership working.
- There was an on-going review of the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Group (MASE) following concerns with the functionality of the group and following the recent Ofsted review.

5.2 In response to questions and challenge from members of the Committee, the following key points were raised:

- MASE intervention was to look at links and interlinks in a similar way to work undertaken on gangs. In Lewisham there had been some issues around the amount of time spent looking at individual cases and there had been a number of changes to Chairs and Officers which had not been progressed as quickly as hoped for.
- The Lewisham Strategic Children's Board's Child Sexual Exploitation Sub-group have the on-going monitoring role of the work of MASE.
- The Director of Children's Social Care had spoken to safeguarding leads in all schools and included information on the Safer London Foundation provides support and counselling for people at risk of CSE.
- Children were identified as of being at risk in a number of ways. These included: self-referrals; through nurses and health visitors; intelligence through the Council or partner agencies; and through Head teachers and safeguarding leads in schools.
- Clarification would be provided to Members of the Committee as to which school in Lewisham was taking part in the Healthy Relationship Programme.
- The Commissioning process for any future youth service provision would ensure that the provider would work within Lewisham processes for safeguarding.
- Violence against women and girls was underreported nationally. There had been no prosecutions for a female genital mutilation in

any London borough. Services such as the Athena service in Lewisham helped women and girls get support on issues such as FGM, forced marriages and domestic violence.
- Return interviews after episodes of young people being missing from care were important.
- Young people with learning difficulties could be more vulnerable to exploitation by older peers.
- There was on-going partnership work with faith groups in the borough. Lewisham had undertaken an FGM Faith Conference which had been highlighted as an example of best practice by the LGA. There was also a Faith Conference scheduled for May or June. It was important to have an on-going dialogue with faith groups.

5.2 **RESOLVED:** That

The report be noted.

6. Safeguarding Update

6.1 Stephen Kitchman, Director of Children's Social Care and Naeema Sarkar, Service Manager, Referral and Assessments, introduced the report to the Committee and highlighted the following key points:

- The numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) had risen by 55% in Lewisham and 60% nationally since 2011.
- There was a particular concern about the high numbers of children who had been subject to a plan for more than two years. This had been in part due to Chairs of Protection Panels being reluctant to stop plans. Additional training had now been put in place to ensure Chairs were confident in making these type of decisions.
- The most common causes of children being subject to a CPP was neglect and emotional abuse, other causes included physical abuse, sexual abuse or multiple categories.

6.2 In response to questions and challenge from the Committee, the following additional points were highlighted.

- 30% of applications for removal of children were for children of women who had already had a child removed. The Council was working with the organisation Pause to help women who have had a child removed from them to break this cycle through education and support.
- It would be helpful for the Committee to see details of the Comprehensive Early Help Strategy for children at risk of or subject to neglect or abuse.
- The Social Worker vacancy rate of 24% was high compared to previous year's vacancy rates but remained Lower than Inner London and London averages. The Children's Social Care Team were committed to maintaining a competent, strong, enthusiastic workforce. Workforce development was seen as keen in retaining good staff.

6.3 **RESOLVED:** That

The Committee has an opportunity to view details of the Comprehensive Early Help Strategy for children at risk of or subject to neglect or abuse.

7. Looked After Children Annual Report

7.1 Stephen Kitchman, Director of Children's Social Care and Tina Benjamin, Service Manager, Adoption, Looked After Children and Leaving Care Team, introduced the report to the Committee. During the discussion and in response to questions and challenge from members of the Committee, the following key points were raised:

- The number of looked after children in Lewisham was 467.
- Placement stability for these looked after children was a high priority for the Council. Achieving placement stability was linked to improved outcomes in health and wellbeing and attainment.
- The Lewisham adoption service had performed well in the recent Ofsted inspection achieving a rating of "Good".
- School attendance of LAC was good and both attendance and attainment data compared well with other local authorities and was praised by Ofsted.
- There was currently 38 Lewisham Looked After Children at University.
- The numbers of unaccompanied refugee children in Lewisham had risen from 12 in 2014 to 24 currently. Work was being done to support them including providing individualised support based on requirements of the particular child or young person. There was often a focus on learning English initially.
- Reasons for LAC placements outside the borough varied and could be as a result of a deliberate decision such as to disrupt a pattern of risky behaviour or remove a young person from a specific localised risk, or it could be from a lack of a specialist offer in Lewisham or locally.
- A big focus was on early intervention to reduce the number of young people being placed more than 20 miles away. This would also reduce costs for the service.

7.2 RESOLVED: That

The report be noted.

8. Select Committee work programme

8.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager introduced the report to the Committee, during the introduction and in response to questions from members of the Committee, the following key points were highlighted:

- A full work programme report would go to the Committee at their April meeting for the 2016/17 municipal year.
- There would be an increase emphasis on providing performance data as part of reports to ensure the Committee had sufficient and robust data to analyse service provision and performance.
- The report in April would also include the standard reports suggested by officers and those by virtue of the Committee's terms of reference. These include: Child Safeguarding; CSE; SEND Strategy; Corporate Parenting and LAC Annual Reports; Secondary and Primary School Standards Reports.
- It would be useful to have regular updates on implementation of the Ofsted Action Plan.

- It was important to ensure the programme was focussed and avoided overloaded agendas.

8.2 **RESOLVED:** That

In addition to the items listed in the report, the Children and Young People Select Committee work programme for 2016/17 include:

- Regular updates on the progress on the Ofsted action plan.
- A report on Children's Centres
- Reports on Secondary School Improvement.
- Information on any proposals regarding the music service
- Updates on the Employee Led Mutual for the Youth Service.
- A report on the review of Alternative Education Provisions in Lewisham.

9. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

9.1 **RESOLVED:** That

A referral be made to Mayor and Cabinet on Item 4, The Ofsted Action Plan:

1. Advising the Mayor and Cabinet of the following:

    - Improved IT capabilities and up to date software is essential in delivering the Council's Ofsted action plan. In particular, in response to recommendation 9 in the Ofsted Report; the Action Plan states the following outcomes as being needed:

        - A stable IT platform, allowing upgrade to the latest version of the "Integrated Children's System".
        - An IT system in place to meet needs of Children's Social Care staff to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
        - A digital strategy with clear achievable and measurable aims/objectives for Children's Social Care including delivery schedules.

2. Recommending to the Mayor and Cabinet that:

    - Improving the IT system and software for Children's Social Care is prioritised
    - The strategic importance of the Children Social Care service is noted and the timetable for implementation be outlined and guaranteed as soon as possible.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm

Chair:

Date:
