

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the People Scrutiny Commission

14 October 2019 at 5.00 pm



### Members Present:-

**Councillors:** Claire Hiscott (Chair), Eleanor Combley, Tim Kent, Brenda Massey, Celia Phipps, Ruth Pickersgill, Steve Smith, Olly Mead and Jo Sergeant

### 1. Welcome, Introduction and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all those present.

### 2. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Jude English, Paul Goggin, Carole Johnson, Gill Kirk

Substitutes were:

Councillor Olly Mead (for Councillor Gill Kirk)

Councillor Jo Sergeant (for Cllr Brenda Massey from 6pm)

### 3. Declarations of Interest

The following non pecuniary interests were declared:

Agenda item 9 – Councillor Tim Kent declared that a member of his family is in receipt of an Education Health and Care Plan.

### 4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved, proposed by Cllr Hiscott and seconded by Cllr Phipps.

RESOLVED: That minutes of the meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019 be approved as a correct record.



## 5. Chair's Business

The Chair formally welcomed Alison Hurley who joined Bristol City Council as Director of Education and Skills on the 18<sup>th</sup> September.

Agenda item 9: Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) action plan is unavailable for this meeting; this is now subject to an embargo on information following the OFSTED/CQC inspection.

Agenda item 9: The SEND Evidence Day is planned for the 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Members will receive further information outside the meeting.

## 6. Public Forum

Four items of Public Forum Business were received and a copy placed in the minute book.

The Chair thanked Ms Smith for attending and speaking to her statement.

Reference to question from Alderman Brian Price: There was a discussion about migration of data being an issue and Alderman Price and the Committee was advised that steps are being taken to improve how IT systems assist operational work.

Reference to question from Councillor Clive Stevens: Cllr Stevens declared that his partner is employed as an occupational therapist.

Supplementary question: Is the 'bottle neck' leading to delayed transfer of care an issue related to appropriate properties available or having enough professionals to carry out required tasks and carry out assessments?

Cllr Stevens and the Committee were advised that Home Care supply is a challenge and recruitment an issue. People are finding other options other than home care to work in, and so there is a need to make the role more attractive and interesting; exploring multi-skilled approach to help with recruitment.

Supplementary question: If SEN is diagnosed early and plans implemented is there evidence this leads to better outcomes when these SEN children have become adults and thus better for all adults?

Cllr Stevens and the Committee were advised yes, this was the case.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care advised the Committee that she has had meetings with home care providers, and they are moving towards an ethical charter including establishing a living wage which will help to stabilise the workforce.

RESOLVED: That the public forum business be noted.

## 7. Risk Report



There was a discussion about the risks associated with savings in the Better Lives programme, and the Committee was advised that the team have carefully mitigated the risks, having looked at the impact of things such as increase of hospital admissions.

The Committee was advised that hospital admissions had significantly increased which had impacted services commissioned. The Committee was advised of the aim to support people in their homes; the Better Lives Programme had looked at different ways of how to provide support, including more community based.

There was a discussion about risks related to the ability to provide safe care for young people, and the Committee was advised that the Council has joined with a number of Local Authorities regarding arrangements for children's homes to ensure sufficient placements could be delivered; also there is a joined up approach with colleagues in education and health.

The Committee asked why Special Educational Needs and Disability is not on the Corporate risk register and was advised that it is on the Directorate risk register.

RESOLVED: That Members would like to have sight of the Directorate risk registers in the next work programme.

## 8. Performance Report

This item was moved to the end of the agenda. There were no questions due to time constraints.

RESOLVED: That questions about performance be put by Members outside the meeting, using [scrutiny@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@bristol.gov.uk); all questions and responses will be reported back to the next meeting.

## 9. SEND Standing Item

The Director for Education & Skills spoke to the report. It was noted that the new Director of Education & Skills has been in post since September and the handover will continue for some weeks.

There was a discussion about the Resolution for Altered Motion, SEND, at [Full Council, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018](#) and the Committee was advised that it is noted there is an error in referring to Full Council motion and resolution as a 'minute'. The Committee noted it confusing for the public to label the motion a 'minute' so it was good this had been corrected.

The Committee was concerned about the tone of the report, specifically with regard to the legal judgment, and the Committee was advised this was not the intention and there was an acknowledgment that the Council had got things wrong and there was a need for improvement.

The Chair stated she was disappointed with the tone of the report, although happier with verbal summary and so reassured; and highlighted the scrutiny Task & Finish group had been stopped with an



understanding there was to be communication of the development of an action plan which had not been forthcoming.

The Committee noted that the Council should consider better communications, and more information should have been provided when the data report was published.

The Committee was advised that there was a commitment to provide transparent and better communication, and developing information would be subject to scrutiny.

There was a discussion about performance, and the Committee noted that the majority of EHCP annual reviews hadn't happened so there was not any evidence to measure improvements, and this was compounded by the fact the data review pointed to data issues; the Committee was advised that there had been access to 2019 outcomes which were not previously available.

The Committee was advised that assessments are now being completed at a higher rate since July although this is still not good enough and there is a need to look at capacity and resilience.

There was a discussion about the data issues and the Committee was advised that data was not accurate, and the data migration issue did not cause additional work for people producing the EHCPs, although masked some important issues and so manual extraction of data was required which took 2 days; all data after April 2019 was fine to use.

There was a discussion about recruitment and team capacity, and the Committee was advised that this dominates the issue of the time it takes to issue Education, Health & Care Plans; recruitment and retention has proved difficult; there has been a scarcity of educational psychologists, needed for the process, and there is a focus on recruitment.

The Committee noted recruitment could be taken to the HR Committee to look at. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills said that there was a need for more staff and a business plan was being developed addressing this.

There was a discussion around the budget for high needs, and the Committee was advised there was a shortfall of approximately £2M.

There was a discussion about accountability of schools regarding how SEND money is spent, and the Committee was advised that whilst there has been a good relationship with schools there has not been the capacity available to do this work, recruitment has been needed.

There was a discussion about tribunals and the Committee was advised that there was learning from the Judicial Review and investment in mediation to reduce the impact on people; and the Council would like less people to need to experience the tribunal process.



There was a discussion about quality of EHCPs and the Committee was advised of the recognised need to look at the whole system and to re-align priorities and place inclusion at the centre.

There was a discussion about attendance and the Committee asked whether there is an understanding of why children miss school, and what is the alternative provision offered to get children back into school; the Committee was advised that there was work undertaken about reasons for non-attendance, and this will provide a richness of information, enabling targeting of provision. There was no detail to share but there will be more detailed work in due course.

## 10 Contextual Safeguarding

The Director for Care & Support, Children & Families and the Prevention Officer, Child Sexual and Criminal Exploitation (Operation Topaz), Avon& Somerset Police, spoke to the report and delivered a presentation (details in the published pack).

Cllr Steve Smith left the meeting. He declared that he is a magistrate and sits in the Youth Court, and so could not be involved in scrutiny of this item.

There was a discussion about multi-agency partnerships and relationships being important to ensure good safeguarding practice.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People noted that good progress has been made in a short period of time since traveling to Glasgow to identify good practice less than a year ago.

There was a discussion about whether professionals are representative of the ethnicities of children and young people across Bristol, and the Committee was advised that the Council has identified that a lot of our social workers and Police are not representative of young people especially in east Bristol, and so the importance of working with local community groups was emphasised.

The Committee commended the ongoing work, and asked how people could report safeguarding concerns, and the Committee was advised that reports could be made via First Response on the [Council website](#) and also on the [Police website](#) and that taxi drivers had been provided with information booklets.

There was a discussion surrounding funding of organisations in the voluntary sector and the Committee was advised that the new Safer Options team holds a budget to be allocated for therapeutic interventions; that allocating funds via grass roots community organisations is effective, complimented by training by Andri Nicolaou (Operation Topaz).

The Committee was advised that Safer Options attracted further funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner as well as the Council, and so has been able to go city-wide.



There was a discussion about use of hotels and related safeguarding issues, and whether identification should be required to mitigate risks. The Committee was advised that having identification requirements could help; that the Youth Hostel Association has a requirement for identification; and that Operation Make Safe, a campaign led by the Police in partnership with Councils raising awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation within the business community including hotels, taxi companies and licensed premises, is supporting the introduction of the need for ID in hotels.

The Committee was advised that some hotels keep a list and will flag appropriate information to the Police

## **11 Strengthening Families Programme**

The Director for Care & Support, Children & Families delivered a presentation (details in the published pack).

Due to time constraints there was no time for questions.

RESOLVED: That questions about performance be put by Committee Members outside the meeting using [scrutiny@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@bristol.gov.uk); all questions and responses to be reported back to the next meeting.

Meeting ended at 8:05pm

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

