
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 JUNE 2020

Present: Councillors Taggart (Chair), Mitchell (Vice-Chair), J Baillie, Chaloner, Guthrie, Laurent and Mintoff

1. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

The Council had commenced holding committee meetings virtually in accordance with Government guidance. Councillors and Officers joined the meeting via Southampton City Council's network. Appointed members were not formally invited to attend this meeting due to technological limitations and capacity constraints. Appointed members were required to forward any questions to the Scrutiny Manager, Mark Pirnie in advance of the meeting, for the Chair to raise during the meeting. A web link to view the live stream of the meeting was made available to appointed members and the public.

2. **ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Councillor Taggart be elected as Chair for the Municipal Year 2020/21; and
- (ii) Councillor Mitchell be elected as Vice-Chair for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

The Chair moved that in light of recent events it was necessary and appropriate to cover items relating to the Covid 19 pandemic at this meeting of the panel and therefore recommendations from minute items 25, 26 and 28 should be updated

RESOLVED

- (i) That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.
- (ii) That consideration of the Ofsted Inspection of Children and Families Services, as detailed in minute item 25 and consideration of the development of the Vulnerable Adolescents Service, as detailed in item 28 would be moved to the next appropriate meeting of the Panel.
- (iii) That the circulation of the membership of the Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership, as detailed in minute item 26 would be followed up after this meeting.

4. **COVID 19 - EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS IN SOUTHAMPTON**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Legal and Business Operations which enabled the Panel to scrutinise developments across Southampton's education and early year's settings during the Coronavirus lockdown.

Councillor Paffey, Cabinet Member for Children and Learning; and Southampton City Council Officers - Derek Wiles, Head of Education and Learning; Anne Downie, Service Manager - Early Years and Childcare; Tammy Marks, Service Manager – Special Educational Needs and Disability were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the officers, the Panel noted the following:

- During the period of closure school staff had supported home learning, and delivered a provision for children of key workers and vulnerable children.
- Pupils in Reception year, Year 1 and Year 6 had returned to school where the school could accommodate re-opening to those year groups. The availability of staff and practical arrangements for accommodating pupils in accordance with the guidance from the Department for Education had limited the ability of some schools to re-open to all pupils in those year groups.
- Keeping in touch with Children in Need, Children Looked After and Children Leaving Care using technology had received good feedback from young people.
- Government funding had enabled laptops to be provided to children who had an allocated social worker and to all children in Year 10 who did not have access to a computer to support home learning.
- Some Early Years provision had to close due to financial problems exacerbated by the Coronavirus lockdown, the number of children accessing provision had also decreased. As parents return to work and demand returns to normal level there may not be enough places.
- Services to support children with special educational needs, disabilities and mental health have been challenged in how they deliver support and each child with Education and Health Care Plan had to have an individual risk assessment.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Head of Education and Early Years shared data on school 'opening' and attendance in Southampton for the week commencing 1st June 2020 with the Panel, when it became available.
- (ii) That, in advance of the next meeting, the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning provided the Panel with a briefing on:
 - a. The steps planned across the school system to begin to close the anticipated widening education attainment gap in Southampton.
 - b. The preparations made, in conjunction with schools, for the 2020/21 academic year, to support the education of Southampton's children and young people.
- (iii) That the number of Southampton's looked after children that have been supported in applying for a university place in 2020/21 would be circulated to the Panel.

5. CHILDREN AND FAMILIES - PERFORMANCE

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Legal and Business Operations which provided an overview of performance across Children and Families Services since January 2020

Councillor Paffey, Cabinet Member for Children and Learning; and Phil Bullingham, Service Lead, Safeguarding, Improvement, Governance and Compliance, Children and Families, Southampton City Council; were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the officers, the Panel noted the following:

- Early intervention had carried on in an online form where possible.
- Social Workers had prioritised making contact with the children who were most vulnerable and has utilised safe ways to make visual contact with those children through meeting outside of the home or using virtual conferencing or telephone contact.

RESOLVED that visiting data for the period of the Coronavirus lockdown, including looked after children would be circulated to the Panel. The data would include looked after children and other categories of vulnerable children if available, alongside statutory timescales where applicable.