

DECISION-MAKER:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE		
SUBJECT:	STRENGTHENING POLITICAL SCRUTINY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES		
DATE OF DECISION:	16 OCTOBER 2014		
REPORT OF:	ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE		
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY			
None			

BRIEF SUMMARY

On 7th July 2014 Ofsted undertook an unannounced inspection of Children's Services in Southampton and the Southampton Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The inspection report has now been published and was discussed at the meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 25 September 2014.

The report acknowledged the improvements that have followed the transformation programme and inspectors deemed the leadership and management of the service to be strong. Ofsted however identified a number of issues that need to be addressed before Children's Services could be considered to be good. One of the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted relates to the Council's scrutiny function. The report recommends that the Council:

'Develop the role of scrutiny within the City to ensure that the wider multi-agency arrangements for the provision of early help and services to children and their families from children's social care, are routinely considered by political leaders.'

The action plan being developed in response to the recommendations includes a commitment to review current scrutiny arrangements to include more regular and rigorous scrutiny of the multi-agency provision of children's services, particularly early help services. In response to the Ofsted recommendation and the developing action plan this report recommends a number of actions to strengthen and develop the Council's approach to the scrutiny of children's services in Southampton.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) The Committee is requested to consider the details in the report, the recommendation from the Council's Management Team to set up a separate panel and agree the way forward to strengthen the scrutiny of Children's Services in Southampton.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In response to the recommendation to develop the role of scrutiny contained within the Ofsted Inspection report.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

2. Not applicable.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

3. Over four weeks in July 2014 Ofsted undertook a second unannounced inspection of Children's Services in Southampton and Southampton Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This followed the previous inspection which had been declared by Ofsted to be flawed.
4. The Ofsted Inspection report has now been published and whilst it recognises a number of the City Council's strengths, the overall judgement is that children's services require improvement and that the authority is not yet delivering good protection and help and care for children, young people and families.
5. The report, alongside wider concerns related to the role of Members in championing the needs of looked after children and care leavers, states that *'political scrutiny arrangements have not been effectively applied to key areas of children's services'* and, within the body of the report, *'regular and detailed scrutiny of children's services is not undertaken by either the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel or the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.'*
6. The comments above led to the following areas for improvement, out of a total of 47 identified within the Ofsted report:
 - Ensure that Members robustly and consistently champion the needs of looked after children and care leavers.
 - Develop the role of scrutiny within the City to ensure that the wider multi-agency arrangements for the provision of early help and services to children and their families from children's social care, are routinely considered by political leaders.
7. The Council needs to respond to the Ofsted Inspection report and is finalising an action plan to address the findings. The action plan will commit the Council to review current scrutiny arrangements and there is an expectation that when Ofsted re-inspect Southampton Children's Services in 12-18 months' time all the actions will have been completed and that the scrutiny of children's safeguarding will have improved and is able to demonstrate it is performing to a good standard. Some of these actions need to be completed in 3 months.

Current arrangements for the scrutiny of Children and Families Services within the Council

8. In recognition of the close links between health and social care and the increasing integration of services, scrutiny of all social care, including safeguarding children, was transferred to the Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (HOSP) in May 2013. Prior to 2013 aspects of children's social care had been scrutinised by this Committee.

9. The HOSP has, in addition to scrutinising the significant health and social care developments in Southampton, considered reports on children's services on a number of occasions since May 2013. This included discussions on the progress of the LSCB and the Serious Case Reviews.
10. However, in light of the feedback from Ofsted the need to make improvements to the current arrangements for political scrutiny of children's services is recognised.

Actions to strengthen scrutiny of Children and Families Services in Southampton

11. To support Elected Members to effectively challenge service providers and decision makers and to ensure that regular and rigorous scrutiny is undertaken the following is recommended:
 - Scrutiny Members receive appropriate monthly performance information relating to the council's Children and Families services.
 - Scrutiny is undertaken on a regular basis, of the performance of multi-agency arrangements for the provision of early help and services to children and their families from children's social care. This will cover the work of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and early help service and include:
 - Monitoring the implementation of the Council's action plan to address the recommendations made by Ofsted
 - Providing adequate challenge on the progress of the Ofsted Action Plan and evidence on improved outcomes
 - Scrutinising performance information, outcomes and the quality of practice.
 - The Council's Management Team has recommended that to ensure regular scrutiny would require this to be undertaken on a bi monthly basis. Under current arrangements, this would mean HOSP (which meets 6 times a year) would need to double the number of meeting per year given the health and social care agenda or if OSMC were to take on the scrutiny, the meetings would need to be longer to accommodate the agendas. Both would have resource implications.
 - Attendance at these meetings will include the Chair of the LSCB, Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding, the City Council's Director, People who has the statutory role of DCS (Director of Children's Services), Hampshire Constabulary, Health (Southampton Clinical Commissioning Group) and other relevant health providers.
 - Provide the necessary support and training to enable Members to deliver this role effectively, so that they can develop their understanding of the scrutiny role, the role of the LSCB and children's services in Southampton. The Centre for Public Scrutiny be invited to undertake training for Members to provide them with the skills and techniques required to effectively scrutinise children's services in Southampton.
 - All Members have been invited to the Corporate Parenting Committee on 4 November 2014 to develop their understanding of the Corporate

Parenting role, the findings from the Ofsted Inspection and the Corporate Parenting Annual Report. In addition, it is recommended that a session is organised for Scrutiny Members to receive a briefing from the Director of Children's Services on:

- The roles and responsibilities of the key agencies in relation to safeguarding children in Southampton
- Overview of the LSCB and Children and Families Division, including structures, staffing and key issues
- The transformation of children's services and what is planned for the next 12 months
- The key children's services performance indicators and performance trends.

12. The council needs to be assured that the actions are effective and to assess whether any additional changes or support are required to strengthen the scrutiny of Children's Services. Therefore it is recommended that the OSMC review the arrangements for the scrutiny of Children's Services in 12 months.

Options for scrutiny arrangements for the scrutiny of Children and Families Services in the future

13. On 12th September 2013, OSMC considered a report with a recommendation to incorporate the Corporate Parenting scrutiny function under the umbrella of the OSMC. However, this recommendation was not approved because the Director, People, withdrew the recommendation at the meeting. This was in recognition that the Lambeth approach was the preferred option, identified by Ofsted as best practice and the Corporate Parenting Committee was chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People. As the Council's constitution states that no person who is a member of the Executive shall be appointed a member of a Scrutiny Body it was recognised that the recommendation in the report was therefore not a viable option under the scrutiny arrangements.

14. The OSMC need to consider the most appropriate arrangements for implementing the actions detailed above. The options available to scrutinise the multi-agency arrangements for the provision of early help and services to children and their families from children's social care include:

- OSMC dedicate regular meetings to the scrutiny of the performance of Children and Families Services.
- The HOSP continue to be the Panel that is responsible for the scrutiny of Children and Families Services and dedicates adequate time in meetings for this, or, given the important and growing health and social care agenda, schedules additional meetings to scrutinise the performance of Children and Families Services.
- Reconsider the option of incorporating the Corporate Parenting scrutiny function under the umbrella of the OSMC.

- The recommendation of the Council's Management Team (CMT) to set up an additional Children and Families Scrutiny Panel for 2 years. In order to provide robust scrutiny of these services, it is vital for Members to develop their knowledge and understanding of Children and Families services. CMT's view is that in light of the Ofsted recommendations on strengthening political scrutiny of these sensitive and complex services, it is necessary to consider special arrangements which can then be reviewed after a period of time. Otherwise there is a danger that because of the full agendas of OSMC and HOSP, it will not be possible to give the necessary rigour to the scrutiny of Children and Families Services.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

15. It is recognised that the recommendation of the Council's Management Team (CMT) to set up an additional Children and Families Scrutiny Panel which will contribute to council priorities of prevention and early intervention and protecting vulnerable people, will require some additional resources.

Property/Other

16. None

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

17. The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Part 1A Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Other Legal Implications:

18. None

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

19. Improving the effectiveness of the political scrutiny of children's safeguarding will help contribute to the following priorities within the Council Strategy:
- Protecting vulnerable people
 - Prevention and early intervention

KEY DECISION?	No
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	None
Documents In Members' Rooms	
1.	None
Equality Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	No
Other Background Documents	
Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:	
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.	None