

## **Children and Young People's Services Select Committee**

**17 July 2019**

### **Adoption of an Improvement Plan for Children's Services**

#### **Report by Director of Children's Services**

#### **Summary**

Following the 'inadequate' Ofsted judgement of children's services in its inspection of February-March 2019, a Statutory Direction was issued to the County Council by the Department for Education on 4 June. This requires the Council to prepare an improvement plan, in order to demonstrate its ability to turn services around. A Commissioner has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Education to oversee this process, and to make recommendations as to whether children's services should remain in the control of the County Council. The Children First Practice Improvement Plan is therefore the mechanism to describe the Council's action for recovery, and is the subject of this report.

#### **The focus for scrutiny**

The Committee is asked to consider the attached draft Cabinet Member decision report, and the appended draft Improvement Plan document, and provide comment to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People prior to the formal decision to adopt the Plan being taken later in July 2019.

## **Proposal**

### **1. Background and Context**

1.1 The Select Committee has previously debated this matter on two occasions. At its meeting on 15 May 2019 it considered the Ofsted report in context, and debated its own future scrutiny role. A further report considered on 19 June 2019 set out the process dictated by the Statutory Direction to the Council, the role of the Commissioner appointed by the Secretary of State, and the preparation of the Practice Improvement Plan, the Council's mechanism to deliver the required service recovery. The 19 June report also explained the structure and rationale of the Plan, and provided some examples of its content.

### **2. Proposal**

2.1 The full draft of the proposed Children First Practice Improvement Plan is now presented for the Select Committee's scrutiny, with its accompanying decision report. Its key characteristics are:

- It is structured against the 12 Ofsted areas for improvement (as set out in the decision report);

- It follows a linked Actions, Outcomes, and Evidence methodology within each category;
- There will be an overarching Children First Strategy into which the Plan will fit – this will embrace the broader context of the collective vision and priorities for multi-agency children’s services, including Early Help; the Strategy is under discussion and subject to consultation and approval is expected to be launched in September;
- There will be an underpinning performance framework to provide unambiguous evidence of progress.

2.2 The Committee will wish to bear in mind certain criteria that the plan to be adopted will need to fulfil:

- That all of the 12 areas for improvement are satisfactorily addressed;
- That the Plan gives a comprehensive framework for service transformation, and full expression to the County Council’s aspirations for children;
- That the voice of the child is central to the Plan and the programme of transformation it represents;
- That the Plan will fully engage and command the confidence of service users, staff, partners, and the public.

2.3 The Committee has already considered at previous meetings both its own future scrutiny role, and new ways in which it can engage constructively with service users and other stakeholders. In considering the Plan in detail, the Committee may wish to comment further on how it wishes to be involved in the process of monitoring the progress of the enactment of the Plan, and the performance information associated with this.

### **3. Resources**

3.1 There is a separate paper being prepared on the Children First improvement investment plan and strategy. An update will be provided at the meeting.

## **Factors taken into account**

### **4. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee**

4.1 The Committee is asked to consider the attached draft Cabinet Member decision report, which has been informed by a period of engagement with stakeholders. Issues members may wish to explore include:

- a) The effectiveness of the consultation/engagement process with stakeholders and service users;
- b) What the consultation analysis tells us and how it should inform the decision-making process;
- c) The County Council’s statutory responsibilities and those of partners and other agencies, and how these have informed the proposals;
- d) What impact assessment has been carried out and any planned mitigations, bearing in mind the Council’s public sector equality duty and other responsibilities identified in the decision reports;

- e) Timetable for delivery of proposals;
- f) Plans to monitor the impact of the proposals to include service users, their families and carers and current service providers; and
- g) Plans for future partnership working with strategic partners.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 Proposals have been published in the County Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions and the draft Cabinet Member report sets out the methodology and process of engagement with stakeholders and elected members.

## **6. Risk Management Implications/Other Options Considered/Equality Duty/Social Value/Crime Disorder Implications/Human Rights Implications**

- 6.1 These sub headings are addressed in the individual draft Cabinet Member decision report (Appendix A).

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Appendix A: Draft Decision Report – Adoption of an Improvement Plan for Children's Services (to follow)

Appendix B: Draft Children First Practice Improvement Plan (to follow)