

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

12 September 2018 – At a meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Cloake (Chairman)

Mr High	Mrs Hall	Mr Lozzi
Mr Baldwin	Mrs Jones	
Mrs Dennis	Ms Lord, left at 13.30pm	

Apologies were received from Mrs Bennett, Mrs Mullins, Mr Wickremaratchi, Mrs Ryan and Kim Curry

Absent: Mr Arnold

Also in attendance: Mr Boram, Mr Fitzjohn, Ms Goldsmith and Mr Simmons

Part I

14. Declarations of Interests

14.1 Mr Cloake declared a personal interest in item 7 (Developing a Sustainable Workforce for West Sussex) as his wife is a social worker. He left the room for the Social Care element of the report. Mr High chaired the item.

15. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

15.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the last meeting held on 20 June 2018 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

16. Responses to Recommendations

16.1 The Committee considered a response from the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills. This included a letter from the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to the Secretary of State for Education, expressing concerns about the inability of the Local Authority to act in contributing to improving the performance of failing academies.

16.2 The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills added that the Department for Education Minister for Schools was interested to receive the letter, and has invited the Leader and Cabinet Member to attend a meeting to discuss further.

16.3 Resolved – that the responses be noted.

17. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

17.1 The Committee considered a tabled paper which was a new version of the Forward Plan dated 11 September 2018 (copy appended to the signed minutes). This version of the Forward Plan was not included in the Committee papers as it had been published following the statutory despatch of the agenda.

17.2 Resolved – that the Forward Plan be noted.

18. Children's Residential Homes

18.1 The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Children, Adults, Families, Health and Education. The report was introduced by Annie MacIver, Director of Children and Family Services and Karen Wells, Head of Market Development. Before taking the Committee through a presentation (copy appended to the signed minutes), the Director of Children and Family Services advised the Committee that she took full responsibility for the recent Ofsted judgement and subsequent events. The Committee heard the following:

- In June 2018, Seaside Children's home was inspected by Ofsted and given an inadequate rating; a suspension of service notice was given. In August 2018, Ofsted visited the home again and judged that insufficient progress had been made. As the unit had not followed compliance as had been set out, a notice to suspend the registration of Seaside children's home was issued.
- The Children and Family Services Senior Management Team subsequently undertook quality assurance visits of the other children's homes in West Sussex. Concerns were identified at two further homes; Cissbury Lodge and May House. The decision was made to gradually withdraw services from these homes following insufficient assurance of the stability of service.
- On 29 August 2018 a briefing took place to inform members of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee, the Corporate Parenting Panel and the local member for Seaside, of the recent events, and to address any questions. It was agreed that an item on Children's Residential Homes would go to the Select Committee as an open space to discuss recent events and future plans.

18.2 In discussion after the presentation, the following points were considered by members and answered by the Director of Children and Family Services, and the Head of Market Development.

- The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised the Committee that the concerns about children's homes had been under intense scrutiny by the Leader and Cabinet. He shared that the Children and Family Services Senior Management Team had been working tirelessly as a collective to create and deliver a Residential Improvement Programme. Members and officers agreed that whilst recent events were clearly unsatisfactory, this should be seen as an opportunity to refocus West Sussex County Council's (WSCCs) offer of children's homes to provide a stable and confident service. The Director of Children and Family Services added that regular conversations were being had with Ofsted, establishing a

collaborative relationship with a mutual goal of culminating a highly functional residential estate.

- The Chairman stressed that the Select Committee's purpose served to be a critical friend, and that children must remain the core priority to ensure services were as good as possible for our vulnerable young people. Members echoed they needed to know what was going on in children's homes, and specifically where support was required.
- Members asked for assurance of the safety and protection of the children who have had to be moved as a result of the temporary closure of Seaside. The Director of Children and Family Services provided reassurance that these children had been safely relocated, that transition visits had taken place and next steps were being taken for their care plans.
- Members asked whether social workers and other staff in these homes were adequately equipped to deal with the difficult behaviours exhibited by some children. The Director of Children and Family Services explained that the previous training arrangements had not been robust enough, but that any staff redeployed from the affected homes would be interviewed to assess their capability, and any gaps in knowledge or training be immediately addressed.
- Members expressed concern that risks in these homes had not been identified or raised until the Ofsted visit. The Director of Children and Family Services explained that the Head of Children's Social Care had recently attended the team meetings of staff in residential homes, and stressed that they have a duty to report and escalate their concerns. Members considered that social workers were advocates for these vulnerable children, and were disappointed that alarms had not been raised to protect them.
- Members heard that this had occurred within a national context where the recruitment and retention of experienced social workers was increasingly difficult. The Director of Children and Family Services reported that Registered Managers (RMs) were incredibly difficult to recruit; the market options were limited in terms of individuals with the required skills and experience, particularly in view of liability for risk and high levels of accountability. Equally, the behaviours of some children were extremely challenging and volatile. The service's aim was to recruit RMs for complex adolescents, with robust provision for both mental health and education.
- A Residential Improvement Plan was being designed to build a wrap-around service. This would include partnerships with occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and mental health professionals, resulting in a wider support network. The Director of Children and Family Services described the strong steer from Leader and Cabinet that WSCC continue as the provider of in-house children's homes. Independent organisations offer an incredibly expensive and inconsistent service and WSCC could do it better, as shown by the majority of the homes achieving good or outstanding Ofsted judgements. The Head of Market Development added that there would be a multi-level approach to the commissioning strategy including considerations of care, planning, infrastructure and investment.

- Members questioned whether the presence of additional resources could have prevented the unfortunate outcome of the home closures. The Director of Children and Family Services explained that without additional resources going forward, the pace of improvement would be slower than desirable. There was limited capacity in terms of RMs and experienced social workers, and it would not be possible to achieve the full aspirations of the Residential Improvement Plan without an adequate workforce.

18.3 Resolved that the Committee:-

1. notes the residential improvement plan in respect of children's homes in West Sussex.
2. works with officers to agree a protocol for communication with members following an inadequate inspection of a children's home.
3. notes the investment required in the children's residential estate in order to build capacity – namely ongoing investment in the infrastructure and maintenance of the estate.
4. notes the strengthened investment required in the children's estate in order to build its capability – including the review of the grading of some posts, leadership capacity, an enhanced learning and development offer and support to management and staff working across children's residential care.
5. recommends all members be notified of contact details of children's homes in their divisional areas.
6. recommends that officers consider the establishment of an emergency budget for Residential Managers to deal with facilities management issues.
7. adds 'Developing a Safe and Sustainable Residential Estate' to its work programme, and revisits the Residential Improvement Plan as part of this.
8. recommends that any children's home judged as Requires Improvement by Ofsted be reported to the Leader, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, the Chairman of the Select Committee, the local member, the Chief Executive Officer and the Corporate Parenting Panel.
9. recommends any facilities management issue that relates to a children's home is prioritised.
10. recommends a standing item for the BPG on children's homes, which considers dashboard data of those difficult to recruit posts (Quality Assurance and Residential Managers), and oversight and governance.

19. Developing a Sustainable Workforce for West Sussex

Mr High took the Chair

19.1 The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Children, Adults, Families, Health and Education, and the Head of School Effectiveness. The Chairman welcomed Cate Mullen, Principal Educational Psychologist, and Yasmin Maskatiya, Executive Principal of Chichester High School (CHS) to the meeting. The Head of School Effectiveness introduced the education element of the report; the Committee heard the following:

- The recruitment and retention of people to education roles was a national challenge. The recruitment crisis was not restricted to teaching posts and also included head-teachers. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects were particularly difficult to recruit to. A report by the National Audit Office (NAO) indicated that children across the Country were being taught these subjects by non-specialists in those areas.
- Schools were responsible for their own recruitment. The role of the Local Authority was to support them by making West Sussex an attractive and good place to work. Localised issues, such as the cost of living and high house prices in certain parts of the County, presented a challenge when attempting to recruit to West Sussex.
- There were a number of reasons attributable to the national challenge of recruiting to education roles. Some examples included the following:
 - Some roles could be very demanding, resulting in a short career span.
 - The burden of marking could often be astounding.
 - A heavy workload, high levels of stress and accountability.
 - A negative ethos in schools, demoralised workforces and unhappy staff doesn't make for a positive impression on new or prospective teachers.
 - Challenging behaviours of some children.
 - Exceeding number of statutory demands which reduces the time and opportunities to undertake behavioural understanding training.
 - Some schools operate a traditional approach to working hours, with a limited openness to flexible working or part-time arrangements.
- Recent recruitment fairs organised by the County Council have shown the wider variety of educational roles available. Events at Fontwell and Crawley had been well attended.
- Members heard that school based training was now the most popular route into a career in education.
- The Executive Principal of CHS shared that contact with young people was widely regarded as the most rewarding aspect of working in a school environment.

19.2 Members thanked Cate Mullen, Yasmin Maskatiya and the Head of School Effectiveness. The Committee raised the following questions which are included below with their responses:

- Members asked about data from exit interviews, and whether this could be analysed to identify trends in why people were leaving the education profession. Members were advised that schools themselves undertook the exit interviews, and that this information was not currently shared with the County Council.
- Members heard that Primary schools were easier to recruit to than Secondary, and were interested to further understand the use of agency and supply staff to fill these vacancies at Secondary level. The Executive Principal of CHS reported that appointing temporary agency staff was not a good use of a school's budget, but that little mechanism existed to facilitate the training and appointment of education staff. Members agreed that a collegiate and collaborative

broker system for schools and teachers would assist local recruitment.

- The Principal Educational Psychologist reported that positive links had been established between WSCC and universities in the South East, to promote teacher training in a Higher Education setting.
- Members asked if, and how, WSCC was prohibiting schools. The Executive Principal of CHS responded that funding was the biggest challenge, however noted that this was a restriction placed upon them by central government rather than local. The financial constraints limit schools from being able to provide young people with extra support to get the best possible outcomes.
- The Executive Principal of CHS added that schools needed strong leadership from the Local Authority. Members heard that the co-ordination of effort and sharing of information could yield positive rewards on a small budget. The Head of School Effectiveness responded that despite the absence of a Director of Education and Skills, a full senior team was now in place that recognised the importance of partnership work.
- Members highlighted that recruitment campaigns could also be targeted at those looking for career changes, and that a public relations plan could inform people about the different options for training. This would raise awareness of the different routes into teaching that might appeal to those not just at the beginning of their professional lives.
- Members and officers agreed that the County Council could support schools in maximising the opportunities of the Apprenticeship Levy by an informative communications and marketing scheme.

19.3 Mr Cloake left the room.

19.4 Mr High welcomed Vicki Edgington, Senior Human Resources Business Partner for Children and Family Services, who introduced the Children's Social Care element of the report. The Committee heard the following:

- There were many similarities between the recruitment and retention challenges across education and children's social care. Many of the themes crossed over such as workload, challenging behaviours and localised issues. As with education roles, the recruitment and retention of social workers was a challenge both locally and within a national context.
- The biggest challenge for the service was demand and capacity; the current caseloads were running at far too high a rate.
- The turnover rate of staff was high. It had fallen recently, but work was still happening to steady this. There were too many people leaving and therefore individual caseloads were increasing, subsequently resulting in low morale.
- Some neighbouring authorities offered a more competitive salary than West Sussex. The service was looking to identify innovative schemes to recruit and retain, including more common incentives such as relocation assistance and key worker housing.
- Unlike education, as the direct employer of social workers the County Council conducted the exit interviews. This has given the service further insight as to why people were choosing to leave.

- Children's social care and Human Resources were taking a refreshed look at recruitment, considering how the County Council could maximise the experience given to employees.
- Newly qualified social workers could not undertake the more complex areas of work than that of an experienced social worker. The service needed to nurture the newer social workers in order to encourage longevity of their career at West Sussex. This would ultimately result in a good level of knowledge and expertise, helping to spread the workload amongst a solid workforce.
- The service was pending the framework for a national pathway for apprenticeships. This would help tremendously with the recruitment crisis as it would offer some alternative routes into a career in social care.
- The overall aim was to bring Children's Social Care to a positive cycle and return caseloads to a manageable level.

19.5 Members were pleased to receive further insight into the recruitment and retention challenges in the Social Care profession in view of the earlier problems identified in Item 6 (Children's Residential Homes). The following questions were considered and answered by the Senior Human Resources Business Partner, and the Director of Children and Family Services:

- Members were interested to know which particular neighbouring authorities were paying a more competitive salary for these positions. Members were advised that West Sussex was most out of sync with areas north of the county, such as Surrey and Hampshire.
- Members were keen to understand the main reasons for staff choosing to leave the County Council arising from the exit interviews. The recurring reasons were given as lack of opportunity for development or competitive pay, unmanageable caseloads which created a high level for risk and subsequently individual accountability, and morale.
- Members heard that disciplinary procedures were appropriately managed, and there was clarity for staff about the boundaries of acceptable practice. The Director of Children and Family Services added that the Senior Leadership team was visible and approachable.

19.6 Resolved that the Committee:-

1. notes the nationally demanding environment within which West Sussex schools and the County Council recruits to education and social care careers.
2. considers how further West Sussex could be promoted as a good place to work in education and social care.
3. considers how to maximise the opportunity the apprenticeship levy funding provides to develop professional skills, build capacity and secure workforce sustainability into schools and education roles in the local authority.
4. recommends that officers consider a pilot mechanism that pools local teaching vacancies or promotes better partnership working.

5. recommends that Human Resources collect data on why people are leaving education roles, and to use that information for knowledge on recruitment strategies.

19.7 Mr Cloake returned to the room.

20. School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022

Mr Cloake took the Chair

20.1 With the agreement of the Committee, the Chairman deferred this item to a later meeting of the Committee.

21. Business Planning Group Report

21.1 Resolved - that the Committee endorses the contents of the Business Planning Group report.

22. Date of Next Meeting

22.1 The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on 31 October 2018 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 2.55 pm

Chairman