

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF** on **Monday, 5 August 2019** at **10.00am**

PRESENT

Councillor G Renner-Thompson
(Chair, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Dickinson, S
Stewart, G
Stow, K

Swinburn, M
Wallace, R

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES

Lennox, D

TEACHER UNION REPRESENTATIVES

Payne, S

Sanderson, J

ALSO PRESENT

Daley, W

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for
Children's Services

OFFICERS

Aviston, S
Bird, M
Jackson, D
McEvoy-Carr, C

Head of School Organisation and Resources
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Service Director - Education and Skills
Executive Director of Adult Social Care
and Children's Services

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Campbell, Cessford, Dunn and Land, and from church representative J Warner.

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 4 July 2019, as circulated, be agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

19. FORWARD PLAN

The published Forward Plan of key decisions for August to November 2019 (attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A) was presented. Members were advised that the confidential Hadrian Learning Trust School report was included later on this agenda for pre-scrutiny, and two further Cabinet reports were listed for pre-scrutiny by this committee in September and November.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

20. REPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER

Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and Monitoring Report 2019/20

The work programme and monitoring report was presented (copy attached as Appendix B to the signed minutes).

Reference was made to discussion at a previous meeting about Child Protection Plans; further information requested by members would be presented when the next updates on the plans were due.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

INFORMATION REPORT

21. POLICY DIGEST

This report, available on the Council's website, provided details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which might be of interest to Members. Any member who would like a printed copy should contact the Democratic Services Officer.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY

22. URGENT BUSINESS

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Ofsted Joint Targeted Area Inspection 17 - 21 June

Members were advised that the report had been agreed by the Chair to be considered as urgent business as the Ofsted had published their findings after the agenda for this meeting had been published.

The report provided an overview of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection in relation to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation that took place in June 2019. (Copy of report attached to the signed minutes of the meeting.) The report explained how Joint Targeted Area Inspections were multi-agency in focus and designed to test out the partnership working in relation to a particular theme or topic. They involved Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

The Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services provided further details including information and examples of the three key elements of the process: an inspection of the multi-agency front door arrangements; a deep dive looking at specific case files where multi-agency partners were involved; and an overview of the strategic leadership and management across the partnership. To conclude, child sexual exploitation had not been a significant challenge in Northumberland but the Council was not complacent in terms of ensuring there are appropriate responses and resources available. All such inspections required an action plan to be submitted to Ofsted to address the areas for development, but Northumberland had no priority areas identified for action. It was also noted that Operation Endeavour was very effective; Northumberland was the only local authority in the north east region that did this work currently.

Members agreed that it was a balanced report with some key positives as no priority areas had been identified for action, nor was there any immediate risk of harm, and actions had been agreed. The Cabinet member added that 21 key areas had been rated as good, and the 14 development action points identified were already being actioned. He also referred to the report's acknowledgement that political support from elected members had ensured that resources for children's social care had been protected.

A member referred to a number of issues regarding communication between NHS Trusts, the local authority and Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure a wider understanding of some issues. Members were advised that a meeting of all senior leads in the organisations mentioned was being organised to ensure that the necessary assurance practices would be in place that those involved held to account.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

23. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

- (a) that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the Agenda as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act, and
- (b) that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

Agenda Item	Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A
8	3 - Information relating to (the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because of the importance of ensuring that the Council is able to make use of commercially sensitive information relating to the contract.

24. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Final Business Case for Replacement Buildings for Hadrian Learning Trust Schools

The report provided an update on the outcomes of the tender process for the construction of new school buildings for Hexham Queen Elizabeth High School and Hexham Middle School and was being presented for pre-scrutiny before Cabinet considered it on 6 August. (Copy attached as Appendix C to the signed minutes). Sue Aviston, Head of School Organisation & Resources, presented details of the report.

Detailed discussion followed, during which key details of issues raised and responses to members included:

- the site would be split into two halves with clear segregations between the construction works and the school
- whilst the Council owned the freehold of the site, the Hadrian Learning Trust had a 125 year lease
- the Hadrian Learning Trust had stated that their curriculum offer was broad. Details could be sought in writing from the Trust
- the school would have a 'A' energy rating
- child safeguarding arrangements would be maintained

- there had been a slow down in the drift in student numbers from Haydon Bridge to Hexham for the next academic year
- stipulations for new school buildings included provision for flexibility and their adaptability
- the listed building should not be at risk of losing any historic ambience; the Council's conservation officer had been involved with the design.

Other key points from members included:

- the timescale was short; best wishes were expressed for its success
- the continued use of the hydro building up to a late point in the project was welcomed
- it was a fantastic scheme and very positive news for Hexham residents and families
- it was good that measures were in place to protect against instability in the construction market and other financial risks.

The Chair summarised that members had confidence in the proposals based on the details provided in responses to questions, so it was:

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be advised that the committee supports the recommendations in the report.

CHAIR_____

DATE_____