

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SAFEGUARDING SUB-COMMITTEE (A SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE), HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON TUESDAY 9 AUGUST 2011

Membership

Councillors

- * Mrs T Sargent (Chairman)
- * Mrs A Brown
- * Mrs T Higgins
- J Knapman
- * R Madden
- C Riley
- * Cllr John Aldridge (*ex officio*)

Non-Elected Voting Members

Mr R Carson

(* present)

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Graham Redgwell	Governance Officer
Matthew Waldie	Committee Officer

The meeting opened at 9.30 am.

14. Apologies

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Cllr J Knapman	Mr R Carson
Cllr C Riley	

15. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations of interest were recorded.

16. Minutes

The minutes of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee meeting held on 28 April, and the notes of the private meeting held on 18 July 2011 (which were tabled), were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. Stage 2 of the Scrutiny

The Sub-Committee considered the draft report on the second stage of the work undertaken by the Sub-Committee, SSC/03/11, as circulated, and comments made by Councillors Aldridge and Riley, with observations from Paul Abraham, Director of Transformation and Performance, SCF.

It was noted that the first draft would require substantial amendment. The Governance Officer pointed out that, although the Munro Report had been published, the Government had not yet given its final response to the proposals. He suggested that the Sub-Committee might wish to wait for the Government's input before considering the Report. It was agreed to replace the paragraph in the Draft with a brief statement, that the report has been issued.

It was suggested that a written response on the Council's view of Munro should be sought from Councillor Candy, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, as a form of pre-scrutiny.

The Sub-Committee looked at the findings/recommendations table.

Matters relating to a number of agencies:

1, on restricted agencies resources. No particular comments.

2, on MAAGs/CAFs. MAAGs/CAFs were due to be looked at in January 2012. The Chairman suggested that Members should consider these issues sooner.

3, on joint training. It was noted that, contrary to what the Scrutiny Committee had been told previously, the accountability of schools in respect of training has not changed; and this applies to academies as well. It was pointed out that it was important to keep a watch on this, as there was a danger of the Council losing its capacity to deal with any problems that might arise. This was an issue that could be addressed to Councillor Castle, on his next visit to the Policy & Scrutiny Committee.

It was suggested that in the meantime the Sub-Committee needed some statistics from ESCB on staff training.

Safeguarding Board issues:

1, on the ESCB Chairman. Noted: Action Point that the ESCB Chairman should be invited to the Policy & Scrutiny Committee for a detailed discussion.

2, on the new ESCB structure. Agreed that it should be monitored.

3, on Serious Case Reviews. Agreed that concerns over procedures should be addressed – eg what form they take, whether they are suitable and also the whole issue of timing.

4, on bringing together strands of safeguarding work for children and vulnerable adults. Agreed that the two Directorates (SCF and Adult Social Care) should be questioned about what is being done to achieve crossover.

5, on the need for adequate resourcing for the ESCB. The Board's crucial role was acknowledged and the need for proper resourcing accepted.

Police related matters:

1, on the use of custody facilities in police stations. It was pointed out that staff at residential homes would always collect young people from police stations, irrespective of time of day/night, so this should not be an issue. Agreed to remove the recommendation in relation to suitable premises. Noted: children who have been involved in criminal activity are treated differently. Also agreed to invite DS Worrton to attend a Committee meeting, to follow up on issues discussed in February.

2, on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Noted: The MASH will enable all interested parties to access electronically relevant information from all other parties. Also noted: Action Point, to encourage agencies to look into this route, as the MASH is not yet in place.

3, on Domestic Violence forms (DV1). Noted – the number of these forms in use daily, and the administrative burden they put on officers. Noted that Essex Police is reviewing the protocol. Also noted: Action Point to liaise with Essex Police as appropriate.

Health related issues:

1, on Health Visitor cutbacks. Situation noted. Agreed to refer this issue to Essex HOSC, once data is obtained.

County Council issues:

1, on SCF director. Noted: Action Point to invite SCF Director to Committee meeting in autumn 2011, to provide update and retrospective

2, the unannounced Ofsted/CQC inspection and peer review. Noted the importance of scrutiny.

3, on quadrants. Noted that only two of the four proposed quadrants are running as yet. Agreed to undertake review in early 2012.

4, on the safeguarding substructure. Noted: Action Point to review the substructure.

Also agreed: to add Action Point seeking clarification of why the EARPs (which appeared to be effective) have been ceased and what the basis is for the ongoing work.

5, on awareness of the shadow Health & Well Being Board. Noted that Essex is well placed in having a shadow Board in place. Also noted the efforts that Councillor Naylor, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Community Wellbeing, has made to inform Members about the process.

6, on scrutiny of the Health & Well Being Board. Noted that Essex is very much ahead of other authorities in the region in undertaking scrutiny of the Board.

7, on experience levels of social workers. Noted: Action Point to seek clarity on this issue, and also on the ratio of permanent to temporary staff.

8, on the ICS/Protocol system. Noted Paul Abraham's corrections regarding name of system: ICS/Protocol replaces SWIFT; SWIPE is a performance system sitting on top of ICS/Protocol. Also noted the importance of cleansing the database.

9, on performance indicators. Noted that this refers to the case file auditing, which technically does not include KPIs, but was cited as best practice by peer review. Also noted the rolling out of the new multi-agency audit tool.

10, on robustness of VPN system. Noted: Action Point to take concerns to ICT Services.

11, on Family Support Workers (FSWs). Noted: Action Point for Scrutiny Committee to glean more information on FSWs.

12, on Children's Centres. Noted: Children's Centres are an item on the November Scrutiny Committee agenda. A draft scoping document has been prepared.

13, on externalisation of residential children's homes. Noted that a separate Member Task & Finish Group has been set up to consider this.

The overall importance of communication was also noted, and it was agreed to insert something about this in the introductory paragraphs to the Report

18. Next Steps

The Governance Officer will produce and circulate a second draft, based on the responses and discussion to date. Members are asked to respond to this swiftly, making suggestions and/or confirming agreement, as appropriate.

The resulting third draft will then be signed off by the Chairman and will be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 1 September 2011.

19. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm.

Chairman