

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 1 NOVEMBER 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)

Councillors in attendance

Cllr J Baugh
Cllr I Grundy

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Graham Redgwell	Governance Officer
Matthew Waldie	Committee Officer

The meeting opened at 10.00 am.

20. Apologies

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Cllr J Knapman	Cllr J Aldridge
Cllr C Riley	

21. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations of interest were recorded.

22. Minutes

The minutes of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee meeting held on 9 August 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23. Stage 3 of the Scrutiny

The Sub-Committee noted that the Council had achieved an “Adequate” rating in both categories under *Safeguarding services*, and in all seven categories under *Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people*, in the recent Ofsted/CQC joint inspection. The Sub-Committee acknowledged that it was pleasing that no single area had been found wanting, but there was some disappointment that none had been rated as “Good”.

It was also noted that nine areas for improvement had been listed, with four of these requiring immediate action and the remaining five having been given a three-month deadline. “Immediate” is not deferred but can realistically be considered as “within a month”.

The Governance Officer suggested that the Sub-Committee needed to divide Stage 3 of the Scrutiny into two parts: “A”, which would consider the overall situation, and “B”, which would focus in on practical issues. The Sub-Committee AGREED to this approach, confirming that it would not progress with Part B until fully satisfied with the outcomes from Part A.

The Committee considered the items for scrutiny, as set out on the agenda, and concluded that the Council’s responses to the following should be looked at as Part A:

- the CQC/Ofsted inspection in September 2011
- the Munro Report - what are the Government's views on this and what action is the Council taking
- Multi Agency Allocation Groups
- SCF vision for childrens services (as agreed by Cabinet in October) – timeline available?
- Future links with the ESCB
- Outcomes from the Peer Review.

In light of the discussion on the day, the Governance Officer subsequently suggested the following areas where Members might wish to ask questions. These do not suggest individual questions but look at subject areas that need to be covered:

- Does the Council accept that the Safeguarding services provided in 2008/09 were inadequate and needed to be improved?
- Is the Council fully aware of the reasons why the services were inadequate? What evidence does it have that the problems at the time will not arise again? How can it guarantee this?
- Does the Council accept the outcomes of the Peer Review and Ofsted inspections and accept these unequivocally?
- If not, are there any aspects not accepted and why not?
- Does safeguarding good practice underpin the SCF vision statement? How is any theory to be turned into practice?
- How will all the strands of work be pulled together? How will this be co-ordinated, and by who?

- Is there a commitment to fund the work required by Ofsted. Is this guaranteed beyond 2011/2012?
- Now that 'adequate' status has been reached what is required to get the Council's service to GOOD then EXCELLENT? What is the time scale for each stage of this progress? Is this realistic given the low point the Council has started from? Is the Council disappointed that no part of the service was rated as better than adequate recently, despite all the time and effort sent on it?
- Will there be an Action Plan to bring together all this work? What role will the Committee and/or Sub-Committee play in this? Pre-scrutiny must be accepted as an important part of this. Basically, how will performance be monitored once the Government Improvement Notice is removed?
- Are any further CQC/Ofsted inspections envisaged?
- How will consistency of practice be agreed across the county? How will staff recruitment policies impact on this? What is happening in areas of traditional difficulty, particularly north east Essex?
- Is the Council pre-empting Munro, which has yet to be signed off by the Government? What are the likely implications should Munro be accepted in full? in part? Are staff felt to be capable of adopting to the new practices? Can any changes be funded?

The following were noted as items to be covered under Part B:

- the viability of a MASH system for Essex (Helen Lincoln has suggested that this may not be viable in the foreseeable future so that could well be a fairly short debate)
- any aspects of MAAGs not already dealt with in Part A
- Common Assessment Framework - how this works in practice and the nature of the forms
- Serious Case Reviews - time taken on individual Reviews and regular updates for Members
- Deep Dive - third study (should be the last time the Sub-Committee needs to look at this)
- Roles given to new social workers and their workloads
- Processes for dealing with absconded children - need clarity as we have had differing stories about this at previous meetings
- Potential merger of adult and childrens safeguarding activities - either full and formal merger or are Members content with the level of working together we have at present
- Training arrangements - level of funding and who carries the responsibility for this
- Role of the component parts of the substructure - are Members content each body has a distinct role and adds something to the safeguarding process
- Dealing with DV1 forms - new police procedures and how forms come to social work staff and are handled at that stage
- Council support for Women's Refuges (added to original list at request of Councillor Ann Brown).

Scoping these issues will take place once Part A of the scrutiny is completed.

24. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed, but ideally before the next CYP Scrutiny meeting (1 December 2011).

The meeting closed at 11.45 pm.

Chairman