

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES
AND SAFEGUARDING)**



**MEETING HELD AT THE BIRKDALE ROOM - SOUTHPORT TOWN
HALL, LORD STREET, SOUTHPORT, PR8 1DA
ON TUESDAY 30TH JANUARY, 2024**

PRESENT: Councillor Hardman (in the Chair)
Councillor Carlin (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Danny Burns, Evans, Christopher Page,
Prendergast, Richards, Spring, Hart and
Sandra Cain

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr. Mhairi Doyle, M.B.E.
Cllr. Diane Roscoe
Joe Banham, Assistant Director of Quality
Assurance, Performance and Safeguarding
Risthardh Hare
Debbie Campbell
Laura Bootland
Steven Martlew
Mary Palin, Education Excellence - Virtual School

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carragher, Gemma Armer, Cheryl Swainbank and Maurice Byrne.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with Paragraph 9 of the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of personal interest were made and the Members concerned remained in the room during the consideration of the item:

Member	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Councillor Evans	Minute No. Ofsted Inspections	Personal due to his role as a School Governor at Marshside Primary School

43. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023, be confirmed as a correct record.

44. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS

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The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer submitting the most recent update reports from the Cabinet Member – Children's Social Care, and the Cabinet Member – Education, whose portfolios fell within the remit of the Committee.

The Cabinet Member update report – Children's Social Care, attached to the report at Appendix A, outlined information on the following:

Childrens Social Care

- Early Help
- Monitoring Visit
- Integrated Front Door
- Court Revocation Team
- Help and Protection Team
- Youth Justice Service

Cared For Children and Care Experienced

- Sufficiency
- Quality Assurance of Commissioned Placements

Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance

- Practice
- Quality Assurance

The Cabinet Member update report – Education, attached to the report at Appendix B, outlined information on the following:

- Delivering Better Value
- SEND
- Inclusion
- School Improvement
- 14-19 Participation
- Early Years
- Virtual School
- School Attendance
- School Admissions
- School Appeals
- Governor Services
- Exclusions
- Pupil

Members of the Committee raised the following queries:

- The Ofsted Letter dated 12th January following the recent Monitoring Visit
- The post ofsted action plan
- The multi-agency approach and if this had improved in the past 12 months
- The pace of change in relation to children services improvement programme
- The current numbers of agency social workers

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- School attendance numbers
- School Exclusion numbers
- Team Around the School

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update reports from the Cabinet Member – Children's Social Care and the Cabinet Member – Education be noted;
- (2) That a report on 'Team Around the School' be brought to a future meeting.

45. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee received a verbal update from the Executive Director of Children's Services on progress made on the Improvement Programme.

Information was provided on the following:

- Family Hubs
- Front Door – contact and referrals
- Dates for the next Ofsted Monitoring visit

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the update be noted.
- (2) A list of Family Hubs to be circulated to Committee Members and Members be encouraged to visit the Hubs in their Wards.

46. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Quality Assurance and Safeguarding) that set out the quality assurance and performance headlines for the period October-December 2023.

The performance Scorecard was circulated on a supplementary agenda and provided data and analysis of the Key Performance Indicators identified as illustrative of 'system health'.

Members of the Committee raised the following questions/issues:

- The number of children in care and how this figure compared to other authorities.

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- The training given to social workers to ensure Child Protection plans are working as they should.
- Repeat Child Protection Plans

RESOLVED:

That the update was noted

47. CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The Committee considered the annual report 2022-2023 of the Sefton Corporate Parenting Board. The report related to all board activities completed between January 2023 and December 2023.

Councillor Mhairi Doyle, Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, was in attendance to present the report.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- The work being done towards the Corporate Parenting Board priority 'Transition and preparation to Adulthood'.
- Whether any work is carried out with the Universities in Merseyside

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

48. SEFTON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

The Committee considered the annual report of the Sefton Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education 2022-2023.

Ian Ross, Transpennine Learning, and Councillor Diane Roscoe, Cabinet Member for Education, were in attendance to present the report.

Members of the Committee raised the following questions/issues:

- The work being done to recruitment more Teacher Representatives
- How many schools in the Borough had applied for the RE Quality Mark

The Committee noted the advice provided by SACRE to the Local Authority as follows:

1.To review the funding of SACRE to ensure it is in line with national recommendations and good practice;

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2.To review the membership of SACRE to ensure it reflects the breadth and diversity of the borough in terms of faiths and beliefs and schools structures.

3.To investigate the provision of quality teaching of RE at Key Stage Four for the non-examined students.

4.To provide opportunities for SACRE to work with other key areas of the Local Authority including the Communities team in order to support community cohesion.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Committee noted the report

(2) That the Committee accepted the advice provided by SACRE to the Local Authority

49. SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of People (Communities) updating on the serious violence duty which came into force in January 2023 and required specified authorities to publish a strategy by January 2024, to prevent and reduce serious violence; and which indicated that work in preparing the strategy on Merseyside had been coordinated by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The report indicated that following public consultation in July 2019, the Government announced that it would introduce legislation relating to a serious violence duty; that this aimed to ensure that relevant services worked together to share information to target interventions, where possible through existing partnership structures, to prevent and reduce serious violence within their local communities; that the Government also announced that it would amend the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that serious violence was an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships and by making sure they had a strategy in place to explicitly tackle serious violence; and that whilst the guidance did not specify a particular partnership to lead, given the categories classed as "Serious Violence" were contained within the Community Safety Strategy, it made sense that the Safer Sefton Together (SST) was the partnership lead body for Sefton.

Appendix 1 to the report provided a timeline of the work undertaken within the last year relating to the readiness assessment, which identified a need to support the relevant authorities across Merseyside to facilitate stronger co-production across existing governance structures; and the consultation exercise undertaken to understand the perception of the problem, causes and consequences.

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The draft Serious Violence Strategy document was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

The report also provided information on the local delivery plan that was more specific for Sefton's communities; and advised that the first draft of the delivery plan was currently being developed and would be mapped against the high level strategic aims of the strategy but also cross-referenced to the priorities contained within the Safer Sefton Together Strategy 2023-26 and would be reviewed through 2024; but however, there was no additional funding for LA's to deliver the duty and therefore the delivery plan would reflect the work already underway in preventing and reducing serious violence in our communities.

The report concluded by seeking the views of the Committee on the draft strategy and the local delivery plan.

The report would also be considered by other Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Members of the Committee asked questions/commented on the following matters:

- The reason for not including domestic violence in the serious violence definition.
- The Safeguarding Children Partnership was omitted from the diagram on page 89 of the agenda
- The impact of local interventions should be included in the document such as the work on the Park Lane estate.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report updating on the serious violence duty be noted
- (2) The suggested amendments to include the Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership in the diagram on page 89 and the inclusion of local interventions be fed back to the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- (3) That a further report be brought back to the Committee in six months to provide an update on the strategy and the work to tackle serious violence.

50. OFSTED INSPECTIONS

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The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education) updating on recent Ofsted Inspection Reports and the work of the School Improvement Team.

The following schools had been inspected and reports received during the Summer and Autumn terms of 2023:

Inspections Summer Term 2023:

- St Jeromes Catholic Primary
- Summerhill Primary
- Shoreside
- Jigsaw
- Valewood
- Christ the King
- Peterhouse School Page 132
- IMPACT
- Linacre Primary
- David Bishop Shepherd School
- Rimrose Hope C & E Primary School
- Churchtown Primary School
- Larkfield Primary School
- Lander Road Primary School
- Litherland High School
- Crossens Nursery
- Christ Church CE Primary School
- The Grange Primary School
- St Benedict's Catholic Primary School
- St Edmund & St Thomas Catholic Primary School
- Hudson Primary

Inspections - Autumn Term 2023:

- Northway Primary
- Aintree Davenhill Primary
- Hillside High School
- Forefield Community infant & Nursery School
- Presfield
- Marshside Primary
- Kings Leadership Hawthornes
- Linaker Primary
- St Michael's CE High School
- Christ the King Catholic High School
- Page

A Summary of Ofsted Outcomes and Support during Spring 2023 was attached to the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

51. EDUCATION SCORECARD

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education presenting the Education Scorecard. The report provided an overview of the data.

The Education Scorecard was attached to the report and set out statistics on:

- Pupil absence rate
- Persistent absence rate
- Pupil exclusions
- Education, Health and Care Plans
- Not in Employment, Education or Training
- National and Sefton Language Data
- Ofsted breakdown by schools
- Early Years Foundations Profile
- Phonics
- Key Stage 1
- Key Stage 2
- Key Stage 4

RESOLVED:

That the data contained in the Education Scorecard be noted

52. WORK PROGRAMME KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer seeking to:

- review the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2022/23;
- identify any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan;
- note the informal meetings and site visits to be undertaken in 2023-24
- note and agree the recommendations from the informal meeting on home education held on 10th January 2024.

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- receive an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and

Members of the committee raised the following questions/issues:

- The issue of school meal provision and the budget implications and whether the committee could receive a report on the subject to a future meeting. Councillor Diane Roscoe confirmed she was aware of the issue and would include an update in her next Cabinet Member Update to the committee in March.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2022/23, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be noted, along with the additional items agreed during this meeting as follows:
 - (a) A report on Team Around the School
 - (b) A further report in six months time on the Serious Crime Duty
 - (c) Councillor Roscoe to include an update on school meal provision in her next Cabinet Member Update.
- (2) there were no items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan that fall under the remit of the Committee on this occasion
- (3) note the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2023
- (4) the following recommendations arising from the informal meeting on home education were approved as follows:
 - I. Officers be recommended to record and report data on the whole process of elective home education, to include data on the number of enquiries made, how many parents are encouraged to keep their child in a school setting, how many children return to school after a period of time being home schooled and how many children are successfully home schooled long term, in order for the full picture to be known.
 - II. The Committee recommends that all Members who have contact with parents who are considering home schooling, encourage those parents to seek further support and guidance on the issues their child is experiencing before a formal request to home school is made in writing to the Local Authority/School, and Members be encouraged to inform the Attendance and Welfare Team Manager about any such contact with parents.

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III. The Committee fully supports the North West regional response to the to the open consultation from the Department for Education on revisions to the non-statutory Elective Home Education (EHE) guidance for local authorities and parents.

(5) the topic of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) be approved for in-depth scrutiny by Members of the Committee during 2023/24 and relevant activities be included in the schedule of the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2023/24, as set out at Appendix B; and

(6) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted; and