

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



**MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM - BOOTLE TOWN HALL,  
TRINITY ROAD, BOOTLE, L20 7AE  
ON TUESDAY 12TH MARCH, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Hardman (in the Chair)  
Councillor Carlin (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors Burns, Carragher, Evans, Harvey,  
Page, Prendergast, Richards and Spring

**ALSO PRESENT:** Gemma Armer, Parent Governor Representative  
Maurice Byrne, Healthwatch  
Cllr Diane Roscoe, Cabinet Member, Education

**53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Sandra Cain, Councillor Doyle, Michelle Ravey and Cheryl Swainbank.

**54. 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 items:

Member	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Councillor Peter Harvey	Minute No. 57 - Cabinet Member Update Reports	His wife works as SENDCO.
	Minute No. 61 - Education Scorecard	His wife works as a SENDCO

**55. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024, be confirmed as a correct record.

## **56. ATTENDANCE OF THE MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB**

At the request of the Committee, representatives from Sefton's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) attended the meeting. Sefton Council, Merseyside Police and NHS representatives gave a brief overview of the safeguarding referral processes for their respective organisation.

The Committee was advised that the MASH provides triage and a multi-agency assessment of safeguarding concerns and brings together a range of agencies in to an integrated multi-agency team.

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

- How the referral forms used by Merseyside Police align with other forms used by the MASH.
- The different levels of need across the local authorities covered by Merseyside Police
- The suggestion of a pan Merseyside system for level of need thresholds.
- How the working relationship between Sefton and its partners had improved.
- The Vulnerability Hub set up by Merseyside Police

The Committee thanked attendees for their contributions and for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) The update be noted; and
- (2) The development of a pan-Merseyside system for level of need thresholds be supported.

## **57. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS**

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

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- 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 Place Planning
- Education Safeguarding

Members of the Committee raised the following queries:

- The issue of school meal provision as raised at the previous meeting on 30 January.
- The increase in EHCP's and the reasons for it.
- SEND dashboard
- Academisation
- School exclusion data

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update be noted;
- (2) a briefing note on the work on academisation be circulated to the Committee; and
- (3) an update from the relevant Team regarding school meal provision be provided for the next meeting of the Committee on 4 June 2024.

## **58. 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:

- The latest Ofsted Inspection letter was due to be published on 19 March 2024.
- The ongoing work on the areas identified for improvement by the Children's Services Commissioner.

Members of the Committee raised the following questions/issues:

- The current numbers of agency staff being employed by the Council.
- The processes around making agency staff permanent if they wish to work directly for Sefton Council
- How the Council is working to improve outcomes for care leavers.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

## **59. SUMMARY OF RECENT AUDIT ACTIVITY**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Quality Assurance and Safeguarding) that set out the summary of quality assurance activity over the last two months.

The performance Scorecard was also included 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:

- Members were pleased to note the greater focus on cases that were graded 'inadequate'.
- The amount of time taken to complete the 'deep dive' audits
- The timeframe until no 'inadequate' practice is being noted
- The quality assurance mechanisms that are in place.
- Reasons for the drop in children leaving care over the age of 16 who remained looked after until age 18.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the update be noted; and

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- (2) an update be provided to the Committee at the next meeting on the reasons for the drop in numbers of children leaving care at age 16 who remained looked after until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **60. OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS**

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 first half of the Spring Term 2024:

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School
- Crosby High School
- Farnborough Road Junior School
- Springwell Park Primary School
- Litherland High School
- Impact Sefton

A Summary of Ofsted Outcomes and Support during Spring 2024 was attached to the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report

### **61. 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

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

- The drop in the number of requests for EHCP's and the reasons for this
- The fall in disadvantaged pupils at key stage 2 reaching the expected standard
- The employment advice offered to 16–25-year-olds classed as not in employment or education.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the data contained in the Education Scorecard be noted; and
- (2) That a briefing note on the reasons why EHCP's are not approved be circulated to the Committee

### **62. REVIEW OF THE OPERATION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING)**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services which presented the findings following a review of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

The main proposals arising from the review were:

- Revised, streamlined Terms of Reference for the Committee which encompass the main focus areas for the Committee.
- A two-year term of office for Co-Opted Members of the Committee, together with attendance conditions of office.
- The establishment of a Children's Services and Safeguarding Parents/Carers Sub-Committee.
- The introduction of a Public Question Time at the commencement of the Committee.

Members noted that as the report proposed changes to the Council's Constitution, the report would also be submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 16 May 2024.

RESOLVED: That

Recommendations (1) to (5) set out below be supported and commended to the Council for approval:

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- (1) changes to membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) in regard to co-opted members, together with the proposed Terms of Reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding), as set out at Appendix 2, be approved;
- (2) the proposal to establish a Children's Services And Safeguarding Parents/Carers Sub-Committee, as set out at Appendix 3, be approved;
- (3) a Public Question Time period for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding), as set out at Appendix 4, be approved;
- (4) the Council's Constitution be amended by the inclusion of Appendices 2,3 and 4 of the report;
- (5) the proposals be reviewed in twelve months' time.

### **63. WORK PROGRAMME KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN**

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

- Note the Committee's Work Programme from the Municipal Year 2022/23 and note a new Work Programme for 2024/25 will be developed in due course;
- 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 the topic of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) was approved for in-depth scrutiny by Members of the Committee during 2023/24; and
- receive an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members of the Committee noted that this meeting was the final meeting of the 2023/24 municipal year and a new work programme would be developed and shared with the Committee ahead of the next meeting scheduled for 4 June 2024.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2022/23, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be noted;

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- (2) there were no items identified for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan that fell under the remit of the Committee on this occasion;
- (3) note the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2023/24;
- (4) 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
- (5) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.