

Lancashire County Council

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 10th December, 2015 at 10.00 am
in Cabinet Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillors

D Borrow	M Tomlinson
B Winlow	T Martin
G Driver	

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Mein.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 October 2015

Resolved: - That the minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2015 be agreed as a true and accurate record and be signed by the Chair.

4. Report on the 2015 Ofsted Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers

Bob Stott, Director of Children's Services attended and presented a report on the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services that took place between 14 September and 8 October 2015 and the actions that have been taken in the immediate period following the inadequate inspection judgement.

It was reported that Ofsted published its report on 27th November 2015 rating the overall effectiveness of the Children's Services as inadequate. The overall judgement was an amalgamated judgement resulting from the following:

- Children who need help and protection inadequate
- Children looked after and achieving permanence requires improvement
- Adoption performance requires improvement
- Experiences and progress of care leavers inadequate
- Leadership, management and governance inadequate

Ofsted also carried out a review of the effectiveness of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board at the same time and the judgement was good.

It was reported that four major factors had led to the judgement:

- Performance management and data
- Aspects of social work practice
- Children in Need (CiN)
- Care leavers

During the inspection, there were also three child deaths, all CiN cases.

The actions taken since the inspection were outlined.

It was noted that:

- A Post Inspection Improvement Board (PIIB) had been established in shadow, prior to the appointment of an independent Chair by the Department for Education (DfE). The Board along with the DfE will have oversight of the actions that will be taken to make the improvements required to services following the inspection outcomes. It is intended that the PIIB will report into Cabinet Committee on a regular basis. An improvement plan will be developed with and formally approved by the PIIB and the DfE.
- An additional £5m investment in children's services has been approved by the Cabinet. This will allow increased staffing levels at the frontline.
- Improvements to the way the electronic records system is used as an effective tool to provide timely and accurate information.
- Initial work to address variations in the consistency of social work practice, clarifying practice standards and expectations.
- Weekly reporting arrangements have been introduced to reinforce monitoring of activity and compliance.
- Strategic responsibility for the team that looks after children awaiting adoption has been transferred to the adoption service.
- Improving services for care leavers.
- Review of the approach to the audit grading system to reflect the Ofsted grading judgement.

It was reported that the operation of children's services was being reviewed by a company called Newton who are Local Government Association accredited. Newton will shadow frontline workers to gain an understanding of how much time is spent with families day-to-day and how cases are managed. They will be reviewing cases to understand how practices, processes, systems and structures can best support and improve end-to-end pathways.

It was noted that management capacity had been increased in the three district areas, North, East and Central Lancashire, with two additional senior managers from County Hall working with the district managers in each of the three districts, to allow increased oversight of social work practice.

Members noted that the report was critical of the management oversight of Children in Need (CiN) and that a review of the current model used was to be undertaken. A review of the current 2,300 CiN cases had begun, to provide assurance that cases are being managed at the correct level, focussing on the highest priority cases. This review using the County Council's own resources and an external social work agency will be complete by the end of March 2016.

The positive findings of the Inspector, were shared with members, including a recognition at all levels that there is a commitment to succeed in delivering the best outcomes for children and young people.

It was agreed that a standard report would be presented to every meeting of the Committee.

Resolved: - That:

- (i) the report now presented and the actions taken following the inspection be received,
- (ii) the Cabinet Committee will receive further reports on the development of actions taken to address the findings of the inspection and to improve Children's Services in Lancashire.

(Following the establishment of the PIIB, regular updates regarding the implementation of the Post Inspection Improvement Plan will be provided to the Cabinet Committee as part of the Corporate Performance Report)

5. Update on a Finding of the Local Government Ombudsman - August 2015

Bob Stott, Director of Children's Services attended and presented a report on an update on a finding of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

It was reported that on 5 August 2015, following an investigation, the LGO published a report, attached at Appendix 'A', which found fault causing injustice and made a number of recommendations, three relating to the specific case and five intended to prevent injustice to other members of the public.

It was noted that the findings of the LGO report involved concern about a case where it was necessary to place a young person in bed and breakfast accommodation. Systems were in place to minimise the risk of using bed and breakfast accommodation as this is not considered to be a suitable option for young people presenting as homeless. Statutory guidance relating to the provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation makes it clear that the use of bed and breakfast accommodation is unsuitable even in an emergency.

However this exceptional step has only been used in a small number of cases and in 2014/15 it was used on only 6 occasions for no more than 4 nights. The issue in all cases has been a lack of suitable provision to meet the needs of vulnerable 16 and 17 year old young people who present high risk behaviours.

As a result of the LGO findings, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools recommended Full Council to agree to actions addressing its recommendations and these were approved on 22 October 2015.

Members noted the actions taken in response to these recommendations set out at Appendix 'B'.

It was reported that further steps will now be taken to avoid the need to use bed and breakfast accommodation, including discussions with housing and residential providers, and foster carers around emergency "crash bed" facilities.

It was noted that bed and breakfast will only be considered as a last resort subject to the agreement of the Director of Children's Services and in his absence the Corporate Director, Operations and Delivery.

Further steps will be taken to develop data collection systems to satisfy ourselves that the County Council is able to identify need and plan sufficiency accordingly. Since the publication of the LGO report a similar case involving the need to place a young person in suitable accommodation involved arranging an emergency placement with a neighbouring local authority and further work will also explore the development of such arrangements as an alternative option. This process will inform the production of a revised Policy for homeless 16 and 17 year olds which will be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools for approval in due course.

Resolved: - That the report now presented be noted.

6. Quarterly Corporate Performance Monitoring Report - Quarter 2 2015/16

Michael Walder, Senior Policy and Performance Officer attended and presented a report setting out details of corporate performance monitoring for 2nd quarter of 2015/16 (July – September).

It was reported that a robust performance management framework will underpin the delivery of the new Corporate Strategy from 2016, with a suite of key performance indicators established to monitor and manage the delivery of strategic outcomes.

Members noted that the key performance indicators would be available from 1st April 2016. Service plans will also include service standards and planned outcomes, reported as metrics with targets.

Quarterly Quality of Service reports against the themes of Start well, Live well and Age well have been produced for quarter 2 2015/16, giving an overview of performance, along with Highlight reports for other areas of the organisation. The Quality of Service and Highlight report gives details of performance against Performance Indicators for that quarter.

An overview of the Quarter 2 budget position was provided at Appendix 'A' so performance could be viewed within the associated financial context.

Resolved: - That the report now presented be noted and further reports be requested at future meetings of the Cabinet Committee.

7. Customer Access Performance Report

Phyl Chapman, Head of Customer Access Service attended and presented an update on the operation of the Customer Access Service (CAS).

It was reported that CAS is the first point of contact for 60% of all incoming telephony and email enquiries to the County Council. CAS was established in 2005, initially delivering only four services. The strategic plan was to migrate additional services into CAS, whilst improving costs and efficiency. CAS currently delivers 24 County Council services and two West Lancashire Borough Council services, including Highways, Libraries, NowCard, Registrars, Certificates, Waste, Welfare Rights, Ask HR and Ask Pensions helpdesk and the Blue Badge Service. Staff are required to deliver both detailed transactional services and validated signposting to agencies across the public sector.

It was noted that within the dedicated Social Care Centre, a specialised and sensitive service is delivered offering information, advice and assistance on all matters relating to Adult and Children's social care.

Members noted that in Quarter 2 CAS Social Care and Contact Centre contractual targets were exceeded

Resolved: - That the report now presented be noted.

8. BTLS Lancashire Services Limited Service Governance and Performance Monitoring Report

Lisa Kitto, Director of Corporate Services and Mark Mayer, Chief Operating Officer, BT Lancashire Services Ltd (BTLS) attended and presented a report providing an update on the Service Governance and Performance Monitoring of the County Council's strategic partnership with BT, covering the first two quarters of 2015/16.

Further information providing a more comprehensive measurement of service delivery was provided at Appendix 'A', including the key performance indicators against which BTLS are monitored.

The achievement of key performance measures were reported as follows:

- ICT Services: all contractual performance targets were met in Q1 and Q2, except the Priority 2 target in Q1, of resolving Priority 2 issues in 8 hours.

- Payroll and Recruitment Services: all contractual and non-contractual performance targets were met within Q1 and Q2.

Members noted that revised contract monitoring and governance arrangements in place since December 2014, continue to be developed and provide a clearer framework within which to manage all aspects of work being commissioned from BTLS. The new approach has resulted in the savings target of £1m in 2015/16 on the BTLS contract, achieved both this year and in future years.

An update on Core Systems was given and the main points were:

- The Asset Management Programme was progressing well and blueprints have been created that set out a vision for the solution across the four service areas affected: highways, property management, capital project management and finance.
- The Customer Access Service systems were at the end of their life and will be replaced, with the implementation of the new system to start in January 2016.
- With the support of BTLS, Startwell has completed a review of their systems which are coming to the end of life as they are no longer supported. Appropriate solutions are being sought for their replacement.
- The current Library Management System is coming to end of life and the service is in receipt of a proposal that will enable the upgrades of both hardware and software. This is currently being negotiated.

Members noted the new arrangements for operation following BTLS taking direct accountability for the Schools CLEO/ICT service.

Members were provided with a BTLS staffing update. Periodic staff surveys were being undertaken, with the response rate increasing from 45% to 65% of BTLS staff, resulting in a greater representative base of staff feedback to learn from and act upon. BTLS had increased investment in training, including its leadership training programme for managers, and would be extended to more staff.

Resolved: - That the report now presented be noted.

9. Corporate Human Resources - Health Check Report

Deborah Barrow, Head of Service Human Resources attended and presented a report setting out details of the County Council's performance against key metrics regarding workforce information for the 2nd quarter in 2015/16.

It was reported that the Corporate Human Resources key metrics regularly monitor and report against workforce data including: sickness absence, the numbers of starters and leavers, reasons for leaving, redeployment activity, vacancy numbers and recruitment costs. This detailed information was included as Appendix 'A'.

Highlights reported for the 2nd quarter of 2015/16 included:

- The number of FTE days lost per employee due to sickness absence was 2.47.
- The number of starters decreased by 17.4% in Q2 of 2015/16 compared with Q2 of 2014/15.
- The numbers of leavers was up by 33% in Q2 of 2015/16 compared with Q2 of 2014/15.
- Turnover increased from 3% in Q2 of 2014/15 to 4% in Q2 of 2015/16.
- The number of recruitment adverts decreased by 23.93% in Q2 of 2015/16 compared with Q2 of 2014/15.

It was reported that the top reason for absence due to sickness was Mental Health which accounted for 29% of all absence. The top reason for absence in the same period 2014/15 was also Mental Health (27%).

Resolved: - That the report now presented be noted.

10. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to be considered.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The Cabinet Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Monday 1 February 2016 at 2.00pm, in Cabinet Room 'B', the Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston.

I Young
Director of Governance, Finance
and Public Services

County Hall
Preston