

Minutes of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board

27 January 2021

-: Present :-

Councillor Bye (Chairman)

Councillors Atiya-Alla, Barnby, Mandy Darling and Mills

Co-opted Members

Tatty Wilson, Church of England Diocesan Representative

(Also in attendance: Councillors Barrand, Brooks, Carter, Cowell, Foster, Kennedy, Law, Barbara Lewis, Chris Lewis, Loxton, Stockman, Sykes, David Thomas and Jacqueline Thomas)

1. Appointment of Vice-Chairman/woman

Councillor Mills was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board.

2. Terms of Reference and Membership of Board

Members received the terms of reference for the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board and discussed the merit of appointing additional non-voting co-optees to help provide expert advice to the Board. The Board welcomed Tatiana (known as Tatty) Wilson to the Board as the Church of England Diocesan Representative.

Resolved:

- (i) that the Membership and Terms of Reference for the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board, as set out in the submitted report, be approved;
- (ii) that the following people, or their representatives, be invited to be appointed as non-voting co-optees to the Board to provide expert advice:
 - (a) Jo Morrell, Torbay Youth Trust;
 - (c) Nikki Leaper/Brent Davison, Devon and Cornwall Police; and
 - (d) a young person who has been through the care system;
- (iii) that appointments be sought for the following Statutory co-optees who have voting rights on education matters:

- (a) Roman Catholic Diocese;
- (b) Secondary School Parent Governor;
- (c) Primary School Parent Governor; and
- (d) Academy Trust Parent Governor (unanimous).

3. Ofsted Annual Conversation Letter and Work Programme

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services provided a verbal update on the Annual Ofsted Letter. The overall feedback was that the Council was moving in the right direction following a number of changes since the last Ofsted conversation in September 2019. This included changes to the political and corporate leadership of the Council. The main areas for improvement related to the transition of children with disabilities moving into adult support to ensure action was taken in a timely manner and social work visits to children not being at a level where they should be, Members noted that this was partly due to data recording issues which should be alleviated through the implementation of the new Liquid Logic software.

It was noted that a copy of the final Ofsted conversation letter would be circulated to all Councillors and the Co-opted Members of the Board in order for them to fully reflect on the contents and to consider if there was any further actions that they wished the Board to examine at a future meeting.

Resolved:

- (i) that the initial Work Programme and timetable for the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board be approved subject to the addition of the following:
 - (a) family friendly vision to be considered later in the year; and
 - (b) to review the implementation of the new Liquid Logic system in September; and
- (ii) that the Work Programme be kept under review by the Democratic Services Team Leader in consultation with the Chairman, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Director of Children's Services to ensure that any relevant emerging issues are considered by the Board at an appropriate time (unanimous).

4. Adoption

The Chairman outlined the background to the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Joint Scrutiny Group for which he represented Torbay Council as the Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services. He highlighted the submitted report which raised some serious concerns in respect of performance for adoption in Torbay, particularly around the low numbers of adopters coming forward and the delay in children being placed with suitable adoptive families impacted by delays in the court processes.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Service and Director of Children's Services highlighted the submitted paper which provided local adoption information and they also raised their concern that the Regional Service was not performing as well as it was expected, however, they acknowledged that there had been some changes in working practice such as considering adoption for all children, where appropriate, and an internal review was being undertaken to ensure better outcomes for our children, which it was anticipated would result in improvements going forward.

Members were advised that the adoption campaign organised by the RAA last year had been cancelled but that the Council had been undertaking publicity locally to try to encourage more adopters to come forward as this was the joint responsibility of the RAA and the Council.

Members noted that a Peer Review of Adoption Services had taken place in December 2020 and would be reported through the next RAA meeting and that the Chairman would be able to bring any pertinent issues to the Board in due course.

Resolved:

- (i) that the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board note the contents of the submitted report and the progress made in respect of adoption; and
- (ii) that the Regional Adoption Agency and the Director of Children's Services be requested to bring forward a campaign to improve the take up of prospective adopters in Torbay and report the outcome to the Board (unanimous).

Chairman
