

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

22 April 2024

-: Present :-

Councillors Fellows, Nicolaou, Tolchard and Twelves (Vice-Chair)

Co-opted Members

Jo Hunter, Church of England Diocesan (virtually)

Non-voting Co-opted Members

Tanny Stobart, Play Torbay

Mike Cook, Voluntary and Community Sector and Alternative Provision (Education)

Miranda Pusey, Devon and Cornwall Police

(Also in attendance: Councillor Bye)

31. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from the Chairwoman, Councillor Law (the Vice-Chairwoman Chaired the meeting in her absence) and Hayley Costar (who was represented by Miranda Pusey).

32. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Board held on 19 February 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairwoman.

33. Sufficiency Strategy and Permanence for Children

This item was deferred.

34. Schools Capital Programme Review

The Sub-Board considered the submitted report which set out the latest position on the Schools Capital Programme and the work being undertaken in respect of The Spires College and Homelands Primary School Private Finance Initiative (PFI) which expires in October 2027.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to where the temporary accommodation was for St Michael's Academy Free School and if the temporary accommodation had affected numbers on roll; what impact was development at Inglewood going to have on primary school places; what impact birth rates were having on numbers and capacity of school places across Torbay.

Members were advised that St Michael's Academy Free School had done an incredible job working with temporary accommodation with another unit due to be in place for September due to having 20 pupils on roll with a PAN of 30. It was expected that all 30 places would be filled once the permanent accommodation was in place.

It was acknowledged that whilst there was capacity overall in Paignton and Brixham, development around Roselands and the new Inglewood site had put pressure on Whiterock and Roselands Primary Schools. However, due to only around 50 houses a year being built out of the 500 approved the conditional approval from the Department for Education for a second free school in Paignton had been withdrawn. There was still potential to increase capacity at Roselands Primary School to make them a two form of entry school if numbers increased sufficiently. However, birth rates across all three Towns had fallen significantly and this would need to increase as well as more new housing coming on board in order to justify creating an additional school in the area. Members had regard to the impact that this had on other schools in Paignton and the ability for parents to secure a school place closer to their home.

It was noted that the new developments around Aldi and Lidl had secured Section 106 funding which had contributed towards Roselands and Whiterock Primary Schools' expansions.

The Director of Children's Services advised that the current Capital Programme included a roll over of £1.6m, which had already been rolled over previously and needed to be allocated and committed by the end of August 2024. Officers were looking at options around Section 19 duties, Parkfield and the Medical Tuition Service to identify a strategic plan for specialist education provision and enhanced resource for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) which this funding could help deliver. Members requested an update on this at a future meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services provided a verbal update on the Acorn Centre. Following further negotiations the project was due to go out to tender in April/May with a completion date of the end of December 2024. Whilst there had been delays due to changes in the project some time had been clawed back following agreement to close the Centre for a period whilst the works were being carried out. The Council was looking at how approximately £97,000 Revenue Funding for the project could be used working with the Trustees from the Acorn Centre.

35. Child Friendly Torbay

The Sub-Board reviewed the submitted report and received an update on the Council's partnership with UNICEF UK in a bid to be recognised as a Child Friendly Community which was formally launched on 22 April 2024. The ambitious partnership would see Councillors, Council staff and local community and voluntary sector organisations turning to children's rights – as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – to guide decisions that affect children and young people in Torbay.

The right of the child to have their views heard and taken seriously, for example, would mean that children would have a say in Council decisions from major policies, to decisions around the care they receive, as well as the opportunity to design local services and spaces.

Torbay Council joins eight other Councils in the UK taking part in the UNICEF UK Child Friendly Cities and Communities programme which works with Councils to put children's rights into practice and the only one in the South of England outside of London.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to how Councillors would be informed and engaged; how long was the discovery phase and how would feedback be gathered; how would we measure success over five and ten years' time; was there anything that could be done through schools via social, emotional and wellbeing classes and were schools and teachers involved; and the top priority for young people identified via Imagine This Partnership was protecting the environment and climate change how was this being addressed.

It was noted that a briefing would be circulated to all Members on 22 April together with wider communications on the proposals later in the week.

The Council was in the discovery phase which would last six months and would bring together existing work, data and partnerships with a detailed programme being developed to align with existing groups run by The Imagine This Partnership, linking in with LocalMotion, schools, voluntary and community groups.

Members recognised that this was about Torbay as a place with reaccreditation every three years and additional badges being worked towards and core principles on a forever journey to ensure the needs and voices of young people were embedded in everything that makes Torbay a place, with the Council leading and facilitating those conversations. This would include weaving in environmental and climate issues as part of the wider projects.

Resolved (unanimously):

That updates on the UNICEF UK Child Friendly Community be presented to the Sub-Board every six months.

36. Torbay Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Joint Inspection Written Statement of Action Update

Members considered the submitted report which provided an update on the progress being made against the Torbay Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Joint Written Statement of Action. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services requested his thanks to be placed on record to the Chairwoman of the Sub-Board for attending a meeting with Ofsted on his behalf to discuss the progress made. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services acknowledged that there was a long way to go, and the Council and its partners needed to deliver all the things they promised to deliver but that we were more self-aware.

It was noted that there had been a change in regime with a new framework in place which the Area would be judged against in addition to the 8 areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection held in November 2021. This would focus on an audit of children and young persons who had an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and were registered for SEND support. There was still a lot of challenge nationally as well as locally in respect of SEND, this had been incorporated into the new SEND Strategy which covered the next five to ten years and had been coproduced with young people, parents, health, education and social care with five key priority areas identified. It was highlighted that SEND was everyone's business. A draft self-assessment had been developed and would be presented to a regional engagement meeting in June with Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission to learn with others how to make further improvements in SEND.

The Sub-Board asked a number of questions in relation to what progress had been made on waiting lists, particularly speech and language; what was being done to identify speech and language in early years; were the Family Hubs involved in helping families with SEND; what were the Not In Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) figures currently and where were they when we were inspected.

In response to questions, it was noted that waiting lists were still long but that alternative options were being explored looking at community recovery and additional investments. The importance of identifying speech and language difficulties at an early age was a key priority and work had been undertaken with early years providers to train them how to recognise and signpost parents to support for SEND. Work and training was also undertaken with primary and secondary schools and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs), with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) was being delivered through the Family Hubs and a dedicated social care officer based within the Team responsible for the Family Hubs so they link across all services. A link between people with speech and language difficulties entering into the Youth Justice system was also highlighted.

The NEET figures were 45 when we were inspected with a target to reduce to 15 by April and by July 0 and as of April 2024 there were 8 people with SEND who were NEET. It was noted that Torbay has a transient population which fluctuated over the academic year. The Council was looking at a better way to forecast need and pathways for young people including internships and the creation of an Internship Forum looking at as many businesses as possible to sign up. It was noted that more care experienced young people were NEET and the overall numbers were 257 which was still too high. This linked to the Child Friendly Community work to inspire young people to want to be in education or employment and the voice of the young person was being heard and gathered in this work. Members also noted the work carried out by Play Torbay around training and apprenticeships.

Members acknowledged the multi-agency and maturity of the Local Area work being undertaken to address the recommendations from the Inspection but that there was still further work to be done.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that an update on the Torbay Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Joint Written Statement of Action Self-Assessment and outcome of the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) engagement meeting be presented to the next meeting in June; and
2. that the Cabinet be requested to work with Council Directors to identify more opportunities for internships within Torbay Council and SWISCo for our young people, including those with SEND.

37. Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)

Members received a verbal update from the Director of Children's Services and the Head of Safeguarding NHS Devon on the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) which was carried out in November 2023 looking at front door services for children's health and protection. The Inspection involved inspectors from across a number of agencies including Ofsted, Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Police, Fire and Ambulance services. The inspection identified 2 priority actions in respect of services delivered by health as well as a further 7 areas that needed to be considered and as a result a written statement of action was required with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) as the principal lead organisation. A written statement of action had been developed and would be submitted to Ofsted by 9 May 2024 and was presently working its way through governance processes within each of the statutory partner agencies. Members received assurance that the written statement of action covered the nine points identified for improvement with a lot of progress already made, particularly around the priority areas. There was a clear focus around professional curiosity, with good leadership oversight with working groups and appropriate governance in place to take forward the actions. The process had helped identify cases within the health sector that needed a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) referral with learning taken and used for educational sessions with the line manager and taking learning and emerging themes to make positive changes across the partnership. Focus was also given to data available to the partnership to help inform their practice and the Torbay Safeguarding Children's Partnership Executive Group was working out what data would be useful, based on what was available from the Police, Council, Hospital and Health.

It was acknowledged that children's mental health, particularly those sitting at a lower-level threshold needed support from multiple agencies whilst they were on waiting lists to ensure there was support for them. This linked to the Children's Continuous Improvement Plan. The partnership around quality assurance was robust, with the Independent Scrutineer playing a key role in this.

The Torbay Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Children's Continuous Improvement Board were monitoring this work as well as ensuring that the voice of the children and their families was heard as well as working with the wider community as part of the activities within the Children's Partnership.

Members questioned what happens with the written statement of action once it was submitted to Ofsted and were advised that it would be monitored via the ICB and Torbay Safeguarding Children's Board. If Ofsted identified any significant issues, it could trigger an Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILAC) inspection.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the update on the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Action Plan be removed from the Work Programme for June, the final written statement of action be circulated to the Sub-Board and an update on delivery against the actions to be presented to the Sub-Board in November.

38. Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Work Programme 2024/2025

The Sub-Board received the Initial Work Programme for the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board and picked up the below changes which were made during the discussions on the early items.

Resolved (unanimously):

That, subject to the following changes, the Initial Work Programme for the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board be approved and kept under regular review by the Chairwoman and Democratic Services Team Leader with consultation being carried out with other Scrutiny Members via the monthly informal Overview and Scrutiny Briefings:

1. remove the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) from 3 June 2024;
2. remove the Work Programme from 3 June 2024;
3. add Sufficiency Strategy and Permanence for Children to 3 June 2024;
4. add Special Educational Needs and Disability Update (SEND) to 3 June 2024;
5. add Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) to 18 November 2024; and
6. add Update on UNICEF work to be a Child Friendly Torbay (six monthly) to 18 November 2024.

39. Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker

The Sub-Board noted the contents of the submitted action tracker. An update on the actions arising from the Spotlight Review on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) would be published as soon as possible. (Note: this document was circulated on 1 May 2024.)

Chairwoman
