



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

18 July 2012

-: Present :-

Councillor Darling (Vice-Chair) (In the Chair)

Councillors Addis, Barnby, Bent, Hill, Kingscote, Parrott, Pentney and Pountney

(Also in attendance: Councillor Lewis)

13. Apology

An apology for absence was received from Penny Burnside.

14. Committee Membership

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative and Non-Coalition Groups respectively, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillors Addis and Parrott in place Councillors Thomas (J) and Stockman.

15. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 3 July 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

16. Children's Safeguarding

The Director of Children's Services presented his report which set out the letter that had been received as a result of the recent peer review of the Council's Children's Services safeguarding of vulnerable children and young people. The safeguarding review had focussed on five key themes and the letter set out the good practice which had been noted and the areas which the peer review team felt the Council would wish to consider further.

In response to questions about the recruitment and retention of social workers, the Board was informed by the Director of the problems recruiting Social Workers and, in particular, that, although the pay package/incentives offered by the Council were good, employment agencies were paying much more. The Board heard that Children's Services would be short-listing for social work managers in September and that new recruits should be in place by December 2012.

The Board praised the Director of Children's Services and his team for the excellent work they were carrying out to improve this service.

It was noted that the results of the peer review would inform the Children's Partnership Improvement Plan which was already in place (and would be considered as the next item on the agenda).

Resolved: (i) that future key lines of enquiry for the Overview and Scrutiny Board be

- Embedding effective partnership working
- Advertising vacant post in wider range of national publications
- Piloting multi agency enquiry forms

(ii) that the Director of Children's Services be asked to provide a recruitment timeline; and

(iii) that the Board lobby local Members of Parliament on the possible regulation of the market for agency social workers.

(**Note:** Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 16, Councillor Pentney declared a personal interest as she had a granddaughter who received help from Children's Services.)

17. **Children's Partnership Improvement Plan - Progress Update and Report Card**

The Board went on to consider a report which provided an update of the progress made against the seven projects which formed the Children's Partnership Improvement Plan. The report also provided an overview of progress through the Improvement Report Card.

Amongst other things, it was noted that Ellacombe Nursery was now open and performing well and that all schools within Torbay now had a designated child protection lead.

Whilst there was a potential fragility of multi agency working, it was recognised that improvements had been made including improved working with the Police and strengthening of the management team through secondment.

In addition, the Director of Children's Services agreed to provide written responses to a number of questions including in relation to Intensive Family Support Services and the development and implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework.

Resolved: (i) that future key lines of enquiry for the Overview and Scrutiny Board be

- Working with new health commissioners for example the troubled families agenda
- The value of early intervention and building capacity in communities

(ii) that success should be celebrated to show to the wider public and to the team that we have succeeded; and

(iii) that an early warning system be put in place to enable the Overview and Scrutiny Board to be advised of potential budget pressures.

18. Adoption Services - Peer Review and Improvement Plan

The Board received a report which highlighted the core outcomes from the recent peer review of Torbay's adoption services and outlined the actions being taken to improve adoption.

It was noted that a new management team was now in place with an agreed action plan and there was now a new constructive challenge and supervision culture. It was also noted that there was now an urgency to move children rapidly into adoption.

The Director of Children's Services agreed to:

- Provide an updated action plan showing completed actions and dates
- Provide a new adoption recruitment strategy
- To review the Corporate Parenting Board membership
- To provide details of waiting list for fostering and adoption

Resolved: that the Board consider the action plan and draft review of fostering within 6 months.

19. Overview and Scrutiny Review of Safeguarding

Resolved: that the Board consider its findings from the items in Minutes 16, 17 and 18 at the informal meeting in September or earlier if the responses were received prior to this meeting.

Chairman