

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board

Date: 13 January 2021

Wards Affected: all wards

Report Title: Establishment of a Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Interim Chief Executive has been reviewing the Council's governance and approach for the management and oversight of the delivery of Children's Services, to ensure that we are collectively doing all that we can to ensure the provision of good services for the children of Torbay. A Children's Services Strategic Quartet has recently been established, comprising the Interim Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, to provide high level key leadership to ensure the Council and agencies/partners improve outcomes for children.
- 1.2 As part of this review, the Interim Chief Executive is proposing the establishment of a Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, namely a Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board, chaired by the Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services with Terms of Reference and Membership as set out at Appendix 1 to this report. With the genesis of the proposal being to ensure a dedicated and focussed political oversight and challenge in respect of all issues relating to children and young people to help improve the delivery of these key services. This will enable the Overview and Scrutiny Board more capacity to focus on other areas within its work programme and approve and monitor the work of its review panels.
- 1.3 To ensure that there is a good link between overview and scrutiny and the delivery of the Children's Services Improvement Plan the Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services will also become a member of the Children's Services Improvement Board.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 The proposals in this report help us to deliver the ambition of our residents thriving, by improving the governance and political challenge in respect of services for our children and young people to ensure the best outcomes.
- 2.2 The reasons for the decision are to improve the governance and accountability for the delivery of overview and scrutiny of services and support for children and young people. Also to enable dedicated focus on these key services provided by the Council and our partners.
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3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- (i) that a Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board be established, as a Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, to be chaired by the Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services, with Terms of Reference and Membership as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report;
- (ii) that Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board considers appointing additional non-voting co-opted members who will help provide expert advice and support to the Board; and
- (iii) that the Overview and Scrutiny Board reviews the effectiveness of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board in six months time.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference and Membership for the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board

Background Documents

None

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council currently has a single Overview and Scrutiny Board which carries out all of the overview and scrutiny functions of the Council, including health scrutiny and children's services. The Board meets monthly and also sets up task and finish groups to undertake deep dives into certain areas and report back to the Board with their final recommendations, which are in turn then presented to the relevant decision maker e.g. Cabinet or Council. This approach has led to some very large agendas, covering a multiplicity of issues, with meetings often lasting up to four hours.
- 1.2 Previous Ofsted reports have highlighted a lack of appropriate challenge in respect of Children's Services and, whilst in recent months the Overview and Scrutiny Board has effectively challenged issues such as the impact on Covid-19 on children and young people and the Children's Services Improvement Plan Quarterly report, this has often been part of a larger agenda, which has limited the amount of time and focus available to the Board. One of the areas of judgement from Ofsted is 'the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families' and as part of this overview and scrutiny has a critical role in ensuring additional and enduring challenge to the service.
- 1.3 It is therefore proposed to establish a Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board as a Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Board to discharge all functions in respect of children and young people. This Board would be chaired by the Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services, who would also have a place on the Children's Improvement Board to ensure a joined up approach to improving outcomes for children and young people.
- 1.4 The membership of the Board will include the statutory education co-opted members, namely parent governor representatives and church representatives, who will have voting rights in respect of education matters only, plus it is recommended that the sub-committee co-opt members who will help provide additional expertise and support to the Board.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 To do nothing, this option was rejected as there would be limited capacity to make improvements under the current arrangements.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications as the new Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board would be supported within existing resources from within the Governance Support Team and Children's Services staff would be required to attend this meeting instead of the main Overview and Scrutiny Board.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications. It has been identified as good practice by other local authorities to have a separate committee for overview and scrutiny of children and young people.

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 The Group Leaders, Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services and Director of Children's Services have been consulted on the proposals and are supportive of the way forward. The Commissioner for Children's Services, Nigel Richardson, has been consulted upon the proposal and is in complete support, indeed in his recent report to the Minister he referenced the proposal as a positive approach from the Council.

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. Tackling Climate Change

- 7.1 Initially the meetings will be held remotely and will therefore reduce the need for members and officers to travel to the Town Hall for the meetings, this will help to reduce carbon emissions, in addition agendas and documents for meetings will be made available electronically to reduce the need for printing and postage. Documents still be available in an accessible format for those who require this.

8. Associated Risks

- 8.1 There is a risk that due to the number of evening meetings being held there will be limited availability to schedule these meetings in the Governance diary and therefore meetings may need to take place during the day, this will impact on which members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board will be able to sit on the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board due to work and other commitments. This will be reviewed together with the overall work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Equality Impacts

9.	Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups			
		Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
	Older or younger people	The proposals will ensure greater focus is placed on overview and scrutiny of children and young people's services to improve outcomes for children.		
	People with caring Responsibilities	The work of the new Board will look at ways to improve outcomes for children and also their carers.		
	People with a disability	The work of the new Board will also look at ways to improve outcomes for children with a disability.		
	Women or men			There is no differential impact.
	People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) <i>(Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)</i>			There is no differential impact.
	Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			There is no differential impact.
	People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			There is no differential impact.
	People who are transgendered			There is no differential impact.

	People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			There is no differential impact.
	Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave	The work of the new Board will help to support mothers and fathers as well as their children.		
	Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)	The work of the new Board will explore ways of supporting children and families impacted by socio-economic issues.		
	Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	The work of the new Board will support public health outcomes for children and their families.		
10..	Cumulative Council Impact (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)	The work of the new Board will have a positive impact across all services, as well as those with our partners as there is a multi-agency approach to supporting children and their families.		
11.	Cumulative Community Impacts (proposed changes within the wider community (inc the public sector) which might worsen the impacts identified above)	None		