

**AUDIT COMMITTEE
30th October, 2015**

Present:- Councillor Wyatt (in the Chair); Councillors Alam and Hughes; together with Mr. B. Coleman (Independent Person).

Apologies for absence were received from Advisory Cabinet Member Councillor Watson.

30. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information likely to reveal the identity of an individual/relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council)).

31. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES RISK REGISTER

Further to Minute No. 27 of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 23rd September, 2015, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services, concerning the review of the Directorate's risk register.

This report contained, as an appendix, the latest position in relation to the Children and Young People's Services risk register. The risk registers have recently been reviewed and updated to reflect the current position in relation to the Directorate and it was proposed that a full review and update will be undertaken on a quarterly basis. All Children and Young People's Services' risks were reviewed, revised and updated as necessary on the JCAD Risk Management System. As the JCAD system is to be decommissioned by the Council, all risks were migrated to the new Council spreadsheet based system to comply with corporate requirements. There were three overall categories of risk Red, Amber, Green (RAG) representing varying degrees of exposure. Each category contains a range of risk scores, resulting in varying degrees of risk within each category.

The risks within Children and Young People's Services risks have been streamlined to create a new register of eight risks as follows:-

1. Sustainable improvement in Children's Services;
2. Delivery of an effective Children's Services within budget;
3. Tackling Family poverty;
4. Reduce the number of Children Looked After (LAC);
5. Ensure effective education for all pupils in a rapidly changing landscape;

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6. Keeping Children and Young People safe;
7. Ensure effective Local Authority support and challenge to schools and academies;
8. Ensuring an effective Children and Young People's Services workforce.

Members discussed the following salient issues:-

- it will take time to make all the necessary improvements; there have been key successes, as confirmed by Ofsted (at two improvement visits) – (i) the 'front door' of the service is good and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub has achieved good performance; (ii) service use of data is helping to improve performance; (iii) child sexual exploitation – the identification of children at risk and partnership working with the Police is beginning to perform well;
- a new quality assurance process is being put in place to improve outcomes for the Authority's looked after children;
- the exclusion of pupils from school is an area of concern;
- budgetary control, commissioning and budget planning; control of the existing budget over-spend;
- a commissioning strategy to be considered by the Corporate Parenting Group; there is specific pressure from the cost of placements of Looked After Children (especially out-of-authority placements);
- the recruitment and retention of social workers; reducing the caseload of each social worker;
- rates of foster care and adoption;
- ensuring that victims of child sexual exploitation are being provided with the necessary support;
- service provision and support for children and young people with a disability;
- the public sector equality duty;
- the pace of change of the restructuring of Children and Young People's Services (including the use of Interim and Agency staff);
- specific health issues affecting children (e.g.: the impact of mothers' alcohol use during pregnancy; complex births); services for children with special educational needs;

- schools funding (Dedicated Schools Grant and the role of the Schools Forum);
- the development of a sufficiency strategy and encouraging service providers to operate in the Rotherham Borough area;
- the cost of support services (e.g.: legal advice) within the Local Authority; the use of service level agreements;
- growth bids for funding being considered by the Government-appointed Commissioners to the Council;
- targeting specific services to meet the needs of vulnerable and hard-to-reach children and young people (e.g.: youth work; quality impact assessments);
- partnership working with other agencies (eg: Health services; Academies);
- the risk to the whole Council of the impact of the Government's welfare reform; (e.g.: food banks; free school meals for Infant School pupils);
- continuing investigations of historic child sexual exploitation and the resulting Court cases;
- the impact of hate crime and racially-motivated crime on children and young people; bullying in schools; provision of support for victims.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and the contents of the Children and Young People's Services risk register be noted.

(2) That the risks contained in the Children and Young People's Services register continue to be the subject of management and mitigating action.

32. AUDIT COMMITTEE ISSUES - UPDATE

The Assistant Director Audit, ICT and Procurement reported on the progress of the following items:-

- : the need for dedicated resources for risk management – a recruitment process continues, with interviews scheduled to take place on Friday 6th November 2015;
- : the position of risk management within the Authority;

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- : proposed replacement of the JCAD risk management system - consultation is taking place within the Authority about the use of a simpler spread-sheet based system; an update on this matter will be reported to the meeting of the Audit Committee to be held on 24th November 2015;
- : work is progressing in respect of the production of a strategic risk register for the Local Authority;
- : External audit of the Council's 2014/15 accounts (annual audit letter) – this letter will be submitted to the meeting of the Audit Committee to be held on 24th November 2015.