

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
11th June, 2014

Present:- Councillor G. A. Russell (in the Chair); Councillors Ahmed, Astbury, Buckley, Burton, Roddison and Reynolds and Co-opted member Ms. J. Jones and Ms. N. Jones (observing).

Councillor P. Lakin, Deputy Leader, was in attendance for item 6.

Apologies for absence were received from: - Councillors Clark, The Mayor (Councillor Barry Dodson), J. Hamilton and Turner and from Co-opted member Mr. Smith.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No Declarations of Interest were made.

2. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS.

There were no members of the Public or the Press in attendance.

3. COMMUNICATIONS.

The Senior Adviser for Scrutiny and Member Development (Scrutiny Services, Legal and Democratic, Resources Directorate) raised two communications under this item: -

- From September 2014, Improving Lives Select Commission meetings would start at 2.00 p.m.. Pre-meetings would take place before the meetings from 1.15 p.m., all members of the Select Commission were invited to attend.
- An Adult Safeguarding Awareness Induction Session was planned for 29th July, 2014. Invitations had been issued to all Elected Members and they were encouraged to attend.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 30TH APRIL, 2014.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 30th April, 2014, were considered.

Councillor Buckley was in attendance at this meeting.

Resolved: - That, with the amendment to the attendance, the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record.

5. APPOINTMENTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON PANELS AND WORKING GROUPS.

Resolved: - That the following appointments of representatives from the Improving Lives Select Commission to the panels and working groups for the 2014/2015 municipal year be agreed: -

- Health, Welfare and Safety Panel – Councillor Russell (substitute Councillor Ali);
- Recycling Group – To be agreed;
- Environment and Climate Change Steering Group – Councillor Astbury.

6. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION: WORK PROGRAMME 2014/2015.

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Senior Adviser for Scrutiny and Member Development that outlined the proposed work programme for the Improving Lives Select Commission during the 2014/2015 municipal year.

Further to Minute No. 64 of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 30th April, 2014 (Improving Lives Select Commission's Work Programme 2013/2014 Update and Forward Planning 2014/2015), the submitted report outlined the remit/terms of reference of the Select Commission as directed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Council's Constitution. Also included was the proposed work programme for 2014/2015 based on agreement from the previous meeting.

The Improving Lives Select Commission had agreed to have safeguarding as its central theme, including: -

- Child Sexual Exploitation;
- Update on the 'Families for Change' and 'Early Help' programmes;
- Children missing from care and home;
- Safeguarding annual reports (Adults and Children and Young People);
- Update on the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of domestic abuse services.

The submitted appendix outlined the full work programme and Members were asked to confirm whether they agreed that the issues were a priority for the Improving Lives Select Commission and whether there were any other areas they wished to include. The proposed work programme was consistent with the Council's key policy agendas and the Corporate Plan

Priorities. The work programme needed to be realistic and best focus effort and resources during a time of reducing resources and staffing.

Discussion ensued and the following points were raised: -

- It was noted that the work programme for the Improving Lives Select Commission would be flexible to allow for consideration of any items that may arise out of urgency.

Resolved: - (1) That the Improving Lives Select Commission's terms of reference and the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be noted.

(2) That the work programme attached at appendix one be approved for 2014/2015.

(3) That it be noted that the Improving Lives Select Commission's work programme during 2014/2015 would be flexible to accommodate any items of urgency, through the re-prioritisation of existing items.

(4) That all members and partners of the Improving Lives Select Commission be urged to bring forward any items of urgency that arose.

7. OFSTED INSPECTION READINESS: CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP AND PROTECTION, CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS.

Councillor Russell, Chairperson of the Improving Lives Select Commission, welcomed the Performance and Quality Manager (Performance and Quality, Neighbourhood and Adult Services) and the Service Manager for Strategy, Standards and Early Help (Safeguarding Children and Families' Services, Children and Young People's Services) to the meeting. The Officers had been asked to provide an overview to the Select Commission on Rotherham's readiness for Ofsted's new inspection framework of the services for 'children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers'. The update also included the outcomes for local authorities across the country that had already been inspected under the new framework.

The submitted report was referred to, along with a presentation that was displayed to the Members of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

- The new inspection framework came into existence from 19th November, 2013, and all local authorities would be inspected within a three-year period under the framework;
- The inspection focussed on local authorities' functions to 'help, care and protect children and young people, along with the overall effectiveness, leadership, management and governance of services;

- The inspection would be 'single-framework' and cover the local authority, but not partner agencies, including all of the functions of social care;
- The Services/functions that would be inspected included Early Help, Child Protection, Looked After Children, Fostering, Adoption, Care Leavers and Local Safeguarding Children Board;
- The inspection would include four 'Key Judgements': -
 - The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection;
 - The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence (including adoption and care leavers);
 - Leadership, management and governance;
 - A review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- The inspection methodology was considered in detail. The new Framework undertook inspections over a four-week period and included interviews and group meetings on site, scrutiny of key documents and case file audits. Emphasis would be given to the individual child's journey;
- Twenty-four hours' notice would be given;
- There were four judgement grades – 'Outstanding', 'Good' (which was the new minimum standard), 'Requires Improvement' and 'Inadequate'. The Service was aware of the differences in quality between attaining 'Good' and 'Requires Improvement';
- If any one of the key judgements were considered to be Inadequate, overall effectiveness could only be judged as Inadequate;
- The new grading structure matched the school inspection framework;
- The profile of inspections that had taken place under the new framework since November, 2013, was considered. 27 local authorities had been or were in the process of being inspected. Sixteen reports had been published. No local authorities had been judged to be Outstanding under the new framework;

- Key messages about preparedness had been taken from the local authorities that had already been inspected. These included having staff trained and ready to undertake file audits, ensuring that evidence was available to demonstrate children's journeys and IT infrastructure;
- The inspection had been described as 'the most detailed and exacting inspection ever'. The length of the inspection and the difficulties of co-ordinating the high number of inspectors (seven individuals, although sometimes nine) was challenging. The month-long inspection was a significant deflection from staffs' day jobs;
- Key themes had been identified in the outcomes of the local authorities that had been inspected, including ensuring the child's voice was captured and considered throughout the process, consideration was given to the feedback of experiences of children and families, engagement and attendance of Partners, and management oversight and performance management;
- The Officers shared the ways in which Rotherham was preparing for the inspection. These actions included: -
 - Ensuring that the required data-set was in place;
 - An inspection plan of actions covering the time when inspectors would be on-site;
 - Deep dive / mock inspection activity and implementing any actions identified;
 - Briefings to all stakeholders on the new inspection framework;
 - A training programme had been developed for social care staff and managers called 'Triple A';
 - Ensuring that the rich knowledge of social workers was reflected in case files;
 - Reflect when risk had been assessed;
 - Evidence multi-agency and partnership work;
 - Ensure that the thresholds for Social Care intervention were understood by all partners.

Discussion ensued and the following questions were asked by the Improving Lives Select Commission: -

- **How ready/confident was the Service for multi-agency working? Were there any difficulties in getting agencies together to work? How were case files chosen for audit and, given there were a number of auditors, how did we ensure that auditing was consistent? TripleA had been running since January – was all training for social workers and managers completed?**

The Service was assured that multi-agency working was embedded, as evidenced in Child Protection Plans and Child in Need processes. There was a potential detachment between what agencies think Social Care's threshold was and the actual threshold. 'Working Together 2013' Statutory Guidance applied. The Local Safeguarding Children Board was the body to challenge and scrutinise this aspect.

Case files were randomly selected by Ofsted. In preparation for the audit, Social Workers followed-up with an 'end of assessment process', including question and answers with the family and/or child. Often positive feedback was received following a Statutory Assessment/s. Independent Reviewing Officers also looked for rigour and challenged practice. The Service wanted to establish a norm for asking people their opinions. In addition, the LAC Council and the Lifestyle survey sought children's opinions.

TripleA was now a mandatory expectation of all social work staff. TripleA was starting 'Phase 2'. Rotherham had a 3% vacancy turnover, which was one of the lowest in the region and comparable to statistical neighbours.

- **How are we evidencing the voice of the child from engagement to exit from the service? How did this change for different age-ranges? Did training address this?**
- **Do we have a waiting list – if so, how do we safeguard this? Are Action Plans timely and specific, and do they match why the referral came in and reflect needs?**
- **Is supervision timely/monthly? Are actions being followed up in the next supervision?**

The importance of the child's voice was highlighted in the 2012 inspection. A piece of work looking at Child Protection processes had been undertaken. It could be very difficult capturing a child's wishes and feelings and making sure they were evidenced. Every document/plan that had been refreshed now included sections to ensure a child/ren's wishes were recorded, included and acted upon. Case studies could be provided to show examples of a child's voice and wishes being met.

Social care did not operate a waiting list. If a Section 47 investigation was required this had to be completed.

The Service could demonstrate that supervision was taking place and key issues were being discussed. Mock-inspection work was looking at this and exception reporting to the Strategic Director was taking place.

- **How much more work does this generate, could it be called an 'inspection industry'. Impact on staff. How can the Council support Officers going through this process?**

The inspections were focused on outcomes for children, young people

and families, and this was helpful. The new framework felt like a multi-agency assessment with only local authorities being held to account for some agencies they did not directly line manage.

Support staff were picking up the burden and supporting front-line staff.

The inspection framework was challenging but helpful and not demoralising. The new framework was tougher. There was a stable and consistent leadership, management and governance at the highest level of the Service.

- **Issues arising from the Self-Assessment?**

Consistency was the main issue as some things were not embedded everywhere.

- **How were positive stories about the Service publicised?**

Good news was collated into an annual report. Rotherham was being promoted as an employer of choice and there was a communication and media strategy in place to best promote the Service.

- **How do you ensure that multi-agency partners are engaged and contributing, for example Early Years or Schools/Academies?**

There had been some challenges relating to governance of academy schools, Officers were addressing this where issues had been highlighted.

- **Risks and uncertainties – ‘Requires Improvement’ and ‘Good’ – did the Service know where the differences lay in-between these judgements and how to achieve ‘Good’, and did the Secretary of State still have the option of external intervention?**

Yes, yes and yes!

The Deputy Leader thanked Members for the debate and challenge. The new inspection framework would change again later in the year and further updates would be provided.

The Chairperson thanked the Officers in attendance for their informative presentation and contribution to the discussion. She emphasised the importance of the Service being ‘Ofsted-ready’. It was clear that all partners in Rotherham were committed to working together to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families in the Borough. From the presentation and discussion section of this meeting, the Chairperson was assured that the level of preparedness within Rotherham had been carefully thought-out and was of a good standard.

Resolved: - (1) That the report be received and its content noted.

(2) That the progress made by Rotherham's Children and Young People's Services in preparation for an inspection under the new framework be noted.

8. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING: -

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Wednesday 9th July, 2014, to start at 1.30 p.m. in the Rotherham Town Hall (pre-meeting for all Members to take place from 12.45 p.m.).