

Cabinet**Thursday, 24 October 2019, County Hall, Worcester,
10.00 am****Present:****Minutes**

Mr S E Geraghty (Chairman), Mr A T Amos,
Mr A I Hardman, Mr M J Hart, Mrs L C Hodgson,
Ms K J May, Mr A P Miller, Dr K A Pollock,
Mr A C Roberts and Mr J H Smith

Also attended:

Mrs J A Potter and Mrs E B Tucker.

Available papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated); and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 (previously circulated).

**1936 Apologies and
Declarations of
Interest
(Agenda item 1)**

None.

**1937 Public
Participation
(Agenda item 2)**

None.

**1938 Confirmation of
the Minutes of
the previous
meeting
(Agenda item 3)**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**1939 Scrutiny
Report: The
Relationship
between the
Family Front
Door and
Schools
(Agenda item 4)**

Cabinet considered the Scrutiny Report: The Relationship between the Family Front Door and Schools.

The Lead Member of the Scrutiny Task Group introduced the Scrutiny Report. She thanked Catherine Driscoll and Tina Russell and their team for their work in improving services to children over the last three years. The Task and Finish Group had been established in response to concerns raised by local councillors about communication issues between schools and Children's Services, particularly in respect of the Family Front Door

(FFD) service. Responses to a survey had been received from 30 schools and members of the Task Group had visited 15 schools from all education levels. Although this was a small sample, schools expressed real concerns about the standard of communication. She thanked Denise Hannibal for her work providing support/training to schools to work more effectively with the FFD service. She outlined the key recommendations set out in the report in relation to consent, communication issues, the referral process and Community Social Workers. The Overview Scrutiny and Performance Board had supported these recommendations and added a timescale for their implementation within 6 months together with a yearly update.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families thanked the Lead Member for the Task Group's report. The Children's Services and the FFD service in particular had been under significant scrutiny from various inspection regimes over the last three years. The problem for the scrutiny was that the FFD service was constantly evolving. The latest Ofsted report referred to the strength of the FFD multi-agency response arrangements which ensured timely and effective intervention and it was important not to undermine this progress. The theme that underpinned the Report was the need to work together with the same shared values and objectives to provide an outstanding service. Some of the recommendations in the Scrutiny Report would not be adopted or were already in place. In particular in relation to recommendation 1 concerning consent, in all but the most extreme cases, parental consent was necessary and referral to families was an established part of the safeguarding process.

He acknowledged that communication with schools could be improved. Children's Services did not have the budget or responsibility to provide further safeguarding advisor posts. Designated Safeguarding Leads could be offered time with social workers as part of their induction programme. The role of Community Social Workers was under review. Training sessions would continue to be arranged for members.

He added that the Scrutiny Report had highlighted the important issue of safeguarding responsibilities in schools. He stressed that a school would fail its Ofsted inspection if it failed to meet its safeguarding responsibilities. Members of the Council, in particular those who acted as school governors, had an important role in bringing about change. It was not possible

financially or operationally for every school to have its own social worker.

He concluded that everyone needed to work together to ensure the success of the service. He requested that a lighter touch approach for scrutinising the service, particularly the FFD service be adopted in the future.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills commented that it was difficult to draw conclusions from the school survey due to the relatively low number of responses. However, it appeared that the new embedded FFD approach was working and that schools were by-and-large satisfied with the interface with children's social care and this improvement had been noted by Ofsted.

A member from outside the Cabinet expressed concern about the delay caused by the requirement for the school to seek parental consent prior to intervention and the impact this had on the child and the school. The Leader of the Council responded that best practice dictated that parental consent was key except where there was an immediate safeguarding risk. Ofsted had backed this approach. The Director of Children's Services explained that the issue of consent was set out in legislation and Ofsted had assessed that the Council was appropriately interpreting and applying the requirements of the legislation. Although the application of the Government Guidance presented a challenge to schools, intervention by the Council was a major step and must only be undertaken without parental consent where the child was at immediate risk in line with legislation. The Designated Safeguarding Leads were responsible for engagement with parents.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Lead Member and the Task Group for their Report and its particular focus on safeguarding arrangements. Partnership working was key to safeguarding and schools were key partners. Any issues arising needed to be addressed to allow the service to improve from satisfactory to good.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet

- a) received the Scrutiny Report on the relationship between the Family Front Door and Schools, together with the response from the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families; and**
- b) noted the Scrutiny Report's findings and**

recommendations and adopted the response of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility as the way forward.

1940 Use of Children's Centre Buildings - Transfer of the Centre at Abbey Park First and Middle Schools, Pershore (Agenda item 5)

Cabinet considered the use of Children's Centre Buildings - Transfer of the Centre at Abbey Park First and Middle Schools, Pershore.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families introduced the report and commented that he had visited the building. He had noted the enthusiastic nature of the First School headteacher and her staff, the new facilities at the site and that the staff were reaching out to the wider economy. He hoped that the issues raised by the local councillor about property rights had now been addressed.

The local councillor commented that the school had an excellent record for early years provision and was renown in Pershore for its level of pastoral care. She fully supported the proposal to transfer the Children's Centre building known as Blossom Vale in Pershore to Abbey Park Schools Federation for the continued provision of early childhood services.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet

- a) approved the proposals for the future use of the Children's Centre building Blossom Vale at Abbey Park First and Middle Schools as outlined in paragraphs 6 - 10 below; and**
- b) authorised the Director of Children's Services to take all necessary steps to give effect to the above.**

1941 Chairman's Announcement

Retirement of Interim Director of Adult Services

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care expressed his gratitude to Avril Wilson for the dedication, vision, direction and order that she had brought to Adult Social Care in her role as Interim Director of Adult Services. The Chief Executive added his thanks from the officer corps for her contribution. The Leader of the Council echoed those sentiments.

The meeting ended at 10.30am.

Chairman