

## **CABINET**

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 15 June 2023.

**Present:** Cllr Robert Cook (Leader), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Lisa Evans (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Gamble (Cabinet Member), Cllr Steve Nelson (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member).

**Officers:** Mike Greene (CE), Garry Cummings (F,D&R&DCE), Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Geraldine Brown, Peter Bell (CS), Reuben Kench (CS,E&C), Ann Workman (A&H) and Martin Gray (ChS).

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Marc Besford (Assistant Cabinet Members) and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

**Apologies:** , Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy (Cabinet Member).

### **CAB/1/23 Welcome and Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

### **CAB/2/23 Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

### **CAB/3/23 Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings held on 16 March 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

### **CAB/4/23 Council Plan 2022-25 Update**

Consideration was given to a report provided an update on the priorities included in the Council Plan 2022/25.

The report focused on the implementation of the Council Plan 2022/25. This was therefore the year-end update on progress during 2022/23.

An update on each of the Council Plan priorities was attached to the report indicated significant progress in all areas of this year's priorities.

A new approach to strategic planning would be introduced during 2023 leading to a new corporate plan being approved in June 2024. This would be covered in more detail in a report to Cabinet in July 2023.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **CAB/5/23 Appointments to Outside Bodies**

Consideration was given to a report that requested appointments to various outside bodies.

RESOLVED that the following appointments be made:-

ARC - Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust - Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture

Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

PATROL (Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London) Adjudication Joint Committee - Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport  
Substitute – Leader of the Council

Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

North-East Flood Defence Committee - Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport

### **CAB/6/23 Minutes of Various Bodies**

Consideration was given to a report that detailed minutes of various bodies for consideration by Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the following minutes be received:-

TVCA Cabinet – 17 March 2023

TSAB – 7 March 2023

### **CAB/7/23 School Term and Holiday Dates - 2024/2025**

Consideration was given to a report on the proposed calendars of school term and holiday dates for 2024/2025 academic year.

School employers were required to set the term dates of their school year. Employers were:

- the Local Authority in maintained, voluntary controlled and maintained special schools
- the Governing Body in foundation and voluntary aided schools;
- Multi Academy Trusts, academies and free schools.

In line with statutory requirements and the protocol agreed in 2008, consideration had been given to compile a set of term and holiday dates for schools in the Borough.

Officers consulted with colleagues from all neighbouring authorities to endeavour to reach consensus on a proposed model for the academic year.

The proposed dates for 2024/2025 were attached to the report.

As part of the consultation process the document was duly circulated to schools/academies and all other relevant parties, including Diocesan Authorities and Trade Unions/Teaching Associations. There were no comments received.

To date the neighbouring authorities that had published their dates had endorsed the proposed matrix for 2024/2025. This level of agreement between authorities would relieve many of the cross-boundary issues that some families had suffered in the past.

RESOLVED that the school term and holiday dates 2024/2025 shown at Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed.

## **CAB/8/23 Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) - Outcomes and Action Plan**

Consideration was given to a report on the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services ILACS - Outcomes and Action Plan.

The authority received its most recent inspection on 27 February - 14 March and their report was published on 9 May. The report to Cabinet summarised the key findings of the inspection; details the area of good practice and improvement also identified; introduced the key strands of the already existing improvement plan which had been revised to take into account the outcome of the inspection, and sought Cabinet approval for the action plan.

The inspection resulted in an overall judgment of 'Requires Improvement'. Ofsted required an action plan to be developed in response and to be submitted to them by 16 August.

The Good and Beyond Board was already established as an independently chaired body charged with providing effective oversight and drive for continuous improvement planning. This Board was already providing leadership and focus for actions emerging from the September 2022 Focused Visit. The Board would continue to provide this oversight role for the revised improvement plan.

The key areas for improvement identified by Ofsted were around:

- a. The quality and effectiveness of plans for children and care leavers, including safety plans agreed with parents.
- b. Sufficiency of suitable foster homes for children.
- c. Frontline management oversight across the service, in relation to the quality of assessment and plans and the impact of interventions.
- d. Opportunities for more children and care leavers to have a voice and to influence the development of services.
6. Other key areas around the need for further action were:
  - a. for placement sufficiency, especially for children with complex needs
  - b. More capacity for foster care
  - c. Evidence of the impact of challenge from Independent Reviewing Officers
  - d. The need for more opportunities for participation for children and young people in care and care leavers
  - e. Consistency of PA support
  - f. Better arrangements for health information for care leavers
  - g. The visibility of the care leavers offer
  - h. The need for a refresh of the corporate parenting approach

The inspection also detailed the considerable amount of progress since the previous inspection and several areas of good and positive practice:

- a. There are clear signs of progress and improvement since the 2019 inspection and since the September 2022 Focused Visit;
- b. Leaders know the services well and are realistic about them;
- c. Positive statements about the front door responses;
- d. Skills and ability around issues such as domestic abuse;
- e. Thoroughness of child protection investigations;
- f. Improving quality of assessments;
- g. Effective legal planning in deciding when children need to come into care
- h. Sensitive responses for disabled children
- i. Effective arrangements around child exploitation
- j. Tenacious responses for missing children - interviews and responses
- k. A focus on school attendance
- l. Effective responses to homeless young people
- m. Good approaches to family and friends placements
- n. Effective adoption arrangements
- o. Good management of out of area placements
- p. Good support for unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- q. High levels of ambition from the Virtual school for children in our care
- r. High quality working and commitment from personal advisers
- s. Arrangements for apprenticeships for care leavers
- t. Good feedback from the Courts and from CAFCASS

The overall outcome was clearly a disappointment. Although there were clear indications of progress since the last inspection, the overall judgement has stayed the same.

The own self-assessment was found to be accurate and that the Council knew the service well and the areas where improve was needed.

There were therefore a number of themes we have developed in response:

- a. The importance of a continued focus on workforce - sufficient staff, with the right skills, who know what is expected of them
- b. Continuing to improve the quality of assessments and plans across our services as these are the fundamental building block for effective work with children, young people and families
- c. Continuing to focus on the need for more foster care placements as this is a significant sufficiency challenge - these are being developed as part of our Investment Plan for children in care, and as part of the regional fostering pathfinder work which is being taken forward in the North east as part of the region's response to the national care review and Government response
- d. Developing more effective arrangements for hearing and responding to the views of children in the care system and those with experience of it.

Therefore response to the inspection, and as part of the ongoing process of self-evaluation and improvement planning linked to the inspection framework, an action plan had been developed to respond to the key issues highlighted in the inspection. This was attached to the report.

The action plan had been developed around four key areas:

- a. Our people - these elements focus on recruitment and retention as well as the way in which we support and develop staff and include a new proposal for an Academy for ASYE social workers - those in their first year of employment following graduation
- b. Our practice - how we embed our focus on our practice model \*(for how we want our staff to work); our use our quality framework which oversees the data, feedback and qualitative information we use to drive improvement
- c. Our processes - making sure that key issues such as accommodation, HR, Finance and ICT are enablers of good practice rather than barriers. A review of the case management system and how this can more effectively provide data and intelligence on practice has already been commissioned.
- d. Our partnerships - how we will work with key partners to address some of the thematic challenges - around threats to children, issues such as domestic abuse and experiences of the care system

The Council was proposing to continue to make use of external support to help drive forward improvements. The improvement board was independently chaired, and the Council had benefitted from other support from other Local Authorities such as around our Emergency Duty Team, and on the use of our ICT system to help drive improvement. This would continue action plan was implemented.

Feedback on the inspection and action plan would also be presented to a member seminar in July.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The outcome of the recent ILACS Inspection be noted.
2. Improvement Plan at Annex 2 be approved.
3. Further feedback be presented to a Members Seminar in July.