

CHILDREN'S AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 17TH AUGUST, 2016

Present – Councillors Dean (Chairman), Kirk-Robinson (Vice-Chairman), Gibbon, Harkin, Haworth, Iqbal, Mistry (as deputy for Councillor Darvesh), Murray, Richardson (as deputy for Councillor Hornby), Shaikh, Spencer, Mrs Swarbrick, Mrs Wild

Also in Attendance

Councillor Mrs Thomas	-	Executive Cabinet Member Deputy Leader
Councillor Cunliffe	-	Cabinet Member for Education, Schools, Safeguarding and Looked After Children
Councillor J. Byrne	-	Cabinet Member for Culture, Youth and Sport
Mr. J. Daly	-	Director of People
Ms S. Schofield	-	Assistant Director, Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services
Ms J. Spencer	-	Head of Bolton Library and Museum Service
Mrs C. Callaghan	-	Head of Service, Child Protection
Mrs S. Bailey	-	Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Darvesh, Gillies, Hornby, Jones, Mistry and Wilkinson

Councillor Dean in the Chair.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Children's and Culture Scrutiny Committee held on 15th June, 2016 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be received and signed as a correct record.

5. THE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Borough Solicitor submitted a report which put forward the proposed Work Programme for the Committee for the current Municipal Year, which had formulated following the workshop session at the previous meeting in June.

Resolved – That the 2016/17 work programme as now submitted be approved.

6. EGYPTOLOGY UPDATE

Ms J. Spencer gave a presentation which updated members on the progress and latest developments in respect of the Eternal Egypt Project within Bolton Library and Museum.

The project had been revised in order to achieve better outcomes and better value for money although it was now no longer eligible for Heritage Lottery Fund monies due to the alterations proposed.

The scheme would also address urgent maintenance issues at a total cost of £3.8M inclusive of private donation.

The presentation highlighted the timescales associated with the project which would involve the museum being decanted and a construction period from 10th March, 2017 to 28th March, 2018.

Particular details were provided in relation to the proposed timeline of works and the layout of the new section, the History Centre, the Animals and Us Centre and the Interactives and Technology Section. Members were also advised on how the Library and Museum Service would deliver its programme of events and activities during the building works. It was anticipated that the Museum would reopen to the public by July, 2018.

An international tour was also planned for August to October, 2016 for the Xiamen Exhibition.

Following the presentation, members made the following comments/observations:

- It was hoped that if the works progressed as planned that the timescales could be achieved;
- the potential to use empty shops in the Town Centre to display items from the Museum although there were associated security and insurance risks and costs;
- the Museum had many items that were of international appeal and this could be marketed to its full potential; and
- the need continue to market the changes at the Museum to retain public interest.

Resolved – That Ms Spencer be thanked for her informative presentation.

7. MULTI-AGENCY SCREENING AND SAFEGUARDING SERVICE – DEVELOPMENT, IMPACT AND 12 MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

Mr J. Daly gave a presentation on the progress of the Multi-Agency Screening and Safeguarding Service (MASSS) for the period September, 2015 to August, 2016

The presentation outlined the background to the formation of the MASS and explained that the service now delivered a coordinated gateway to screen and respond to all contact and referrals relating to children at risk of harm.

The Service had become operational from November, 2015 and was based at the Castle Hill Centre. It brought together the three District Referral and Assessment Teams with Public Police Unit to create the MASSS duty room as a gateway to screen and respond to all contact and referrals relating to children at risk of harm.

The report identified the main aims, objectives and advantages of the Service, as follows:

- one Borough wide team as the main point of contact for partner agencies when concerned about a child or a child who had additional needs.
- the duty room enabled joint child protection enquiries, information sharing and actions to take place immediately so no delay;
- build stronger, more effective working relationships and removal of barriers; and
- the intention to increase partner agencies presence in the MASSS.

The report went on to outline the activity in the 9 months between November, 2016 and July, 2016:

- contacts taken 9770;
- referrals taken – 3509;
- assessments completed – 3169; and
- strategy discussions with police (mainly completed on day of referral – 1237 (total 14/15 1300)).

The presentation also outlined the findings of a recent peer review with Rochdale and Blackburn with Darwen where Bolton had received positive feedback.

Future areas for development and improvement and the next steps for the Service were also identified. The Adults and Safeguarding Section would also relocate to the Castle Hill Centre in September, 2016 which would further enhance in interagency communication and improve outcomes.

Following the presentation, members made the following observations/comments:

- in comparison to some other authorities, Bolton invested significant resources into Safeguarding;
- the high ratio percentage of referrals to assessments in Bolton although plans were in place to try to reduce them;

- the Police Officers based at Castle Hill were employed by Greater Manchester Police and worked closely with the out of hours team;
- the lack of national guidelines on the numbers of cases per caseworker and that often social workers were finding that they had insufficient time to close cases before they were back on the duty rota;
- a steady increase in reports of domestic violence in Bolton which could be attributed to better reporting mechanisms and less tolerance by people who experienced it.

Resolved – That Mr Daly be thanked for his informative presentation.

8. SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Mrs C. Callaghan gave a presentation on Safeguarding activity in Bolton between April 2015 and March, 2016.

The presentation provided detailed information in terms of the numbers of contacts, referrals, assessments and joint investigation strategy discussions that had taken place. It was noted that children subject to Child Protection Plans was 238 which was a reduction of 200 following the introduction of the Action Plan adopted in September, 2014.

The presentation went on to highlight the complex safeguarding that had taken place during 2015/16 which included:

- multi-agency training;
- Learning and Improvement Group;
- missing from home or care; and
- sexual exploitation and missing – multi agency group met fortnightly, high risk cases discussed – action plans were in place for 104 children.

With regard to early intervention and help, the presentation advised that the following had been put in place:

- relaunch of Framework for Action process in October, 2014 – significant increase in Early Help assessments and reviews;
- 129 Early Help assessments had been initiated – an increase of 21.
- 2151 Early Help assessment reviews had taken place which was an increase of 1136;
- 2882 Early Help assessments were open at the end of March, 2016 what has an increase 947;
- 58% of cases were closed with actions completed with no need for Social Worker involvement; and
- Early Help assessment had been used to refer to Social Care.

The presentation went on to outline the role of Project Phoenix which was Greater Manchester Police's response to CSE across all GM authorities. Its main purpose was to disrupt and prosecute offenders.

Statistics showed that there had been a sharp increase in the number of referrals to the team last year. More referrals were coming through from Multi Agency Screening and Safeguarding Service. There had also been an increase in the numbers of online related grooming and offending.

The presentation also focused on the nature and outcome of a recent peer review undertaken in respect of the Phoenix Project. An action plan had been formulated to address the findings.

Members were also advised of the current caseload which included 63 open cases, 10 of which were high risk, 36 which were medium risk, 6 which were low risk and 8 waiting assessment.

Full details of the weekly operation to disrupt offenders were also provided.

Following the presentation, members made the following comments/observations:

- the high number of safeguarding cases demonstrated that Bolton was active and successful in detecting and identifying children at risk;
- the value of the Child Protection Conferences; and
- the low incidence of Female Genital Mutilation in Bolton.

Resolved – That Mrs Callaghan be thanked for her informative presentation.

9. MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The Committee received the extracts of minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:-

- the Executive Cabinet Deputy Leader's Portfolio held on 6th June and 11th July, 2016;
- Children's Services and Safeguarding Policy Development Group held on 29th June, 2016; and
- the Cabinet held on 4th July, 2016.

Resolved – That the minutes of the various meetings be noted.

(The meeting started at 5.00pm and finished at 6.15pm)

F8

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