

**EXECUTIVE**  
**14<sup>th</sup> September 2016 - Extract from draft minutes**

**73. OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Report CS17036

Ofsted inspected the Council's services for children in need of help and protection and children looked after between 11<sup>th</sup> April and 5<sup>th</sup> May 2016. A linked inspection of the Bromley Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) also took place at the same time. The full Ofsted inspection report, published on 27th June 2016, was appended to Report CS17036. Although the Inspection had identified some strengths across Children's Services, the Local Authority had received an overall judgement of 'Inadequate' and the BSCB was rated with a judgement of 'Requires Improvement'.

Report CS17036 summarised the inspection findings, immediate actions taken to respond to the findings, and the Council's plans for further improvement as set out in a draft improvement action plan for submission by 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (also appended to the report). The report further outlined potential funding requirements resulting from the draft improvement action plan and sought relevant approvals.

At the request of the Chairman of the Care Services PDS Committee an additional column, "*Action Plan ID*", was added to the table at Paragraph 6.3 of Report CS17036 to cross refer expenditure to the relevant issue/area in the Draft Improvement Action Plan. The replacement table was available for Members at the meeting and previously circulated.

Following publication of the inspection report, the Secretary of State for Education appointed a Commissioner for Children's Services in Bromley who was expected to:

- make recommendations for the immediate improvement of children's social care and to recommend any additional support required to deliver improvement;
- review the Council's leadership and management capacity and capability to drive forward changes necessary to achieve the required standard; and
- make a recommendation to the Secretary of State as to whether alternative delivery arrangements are the most effective way of securing and sustaining improvement and if so, to recommend the form the alternative delivery arrangements should take.

The Commissioner would provide her report to the Secretary of State by 30th September 2016.

Report CS17036 and its appendices had been previously considered by the Care Services PDS Committee at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016. Draft minutes of the Committee's consideration of the item were also tabled for the Executive's information.

In discussion the Leader thanked Members present at the Care Services PDS meeting the previous evening for their comments on the item and prior scrutiny. The

Leader summarised points raised, linked to areas of improvement needed. The draft Improvement Plan had been endorsed by the Children's Service Improvement Governance (CSIG) Board and the Leader recommended its acceptance. It was necessary to implement the Plan and monitor improvement. Professional officers needed to be fully skilled as soon as possible and there was also a need for improved scrutiny. A Member suggested that external auditors could assist on scrutiny.

Significant work had already taken placed on implementing and completing actions from the Improvement Plan. An initial action plan to safeguard children had also been implemented with details outlined to Members including: a review of children and risk; an escalation of cases to care; an increase in the number of children becoming protected and looked after (including increased court work); and a general increase in the level of escalations. There were also legal service improvements. Additionally, caseloads were being brought to recommended levels. Quality from the service would increase over the next couple of years along with a rise in the level of case audits month by month.

On improving scrutiny, it was suggested that the Corporate Parenting role of Members be emphasised. It was also suggested that scrutiny training (highlighted in the Improvement Plan at ID 1.6 under *Leadership and Governance*) might be an area for consideration as part of a PDS meeting. There would also be training for new Members in 2018 following the local election. Refresher training on scrutiny practice might be appropriate for PDS Committees. Scrutiny training could also be discussed within the Groups. In view of Care Services PDS having a key scrutiny role for Children's Services, a Member suggested that the Committee effectively be re-constituted as two committees – one for Children's Services and one for Adult Services. In this regard, the Leader highlighted the role of the CSIG Board.

On the need to work better with partners, the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety outlined co-operation with the Metropolitan Police including representation by the Deputy Borough Commander and his role in heading a Sub-Group to help address Ofsted's Recommendation 7, particularly in regard to eliminating gangs.

Concluding debate, the Leader highlighted his commitment to finding resources for the Improvement Plan along with a process of scrutiny and consultation with the new Director.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (1) the actions set out in the draft Children's Services Improvement Plan to be submitted to Ofsted be agreed;**
- (2) the Constitution Improvement Working Group be requested to support the Director of Corporate Services in developing and delivering any necessary constitutional changes required by the Improvement action plan;**
- (3) Council be recommended to approve funding for the posts included in Phase One and Phase Two which have already been committed totalling £949k**

in 2016/17 with a full year effect of £1,471k as set out at paragraph 6.3 of Report CS17036; and

**(4) Council agree to release up to a further £141k in 2016/17 and a further £795k in a full year for Phase 3, with any utilisation of the monies being subject to approval by the Executive following an appropriate level of scrutiny.**