

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (O&S)  
COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING**

**10:00 hours on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019, Committee Room 6 - Actions**

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**Present:**

Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq (Chair)

Councillors: Kath Scott and Alex Yip

**Also Present:**

Andy Couldrick, Chief Executive, Children's Trust

Theresa Kane, Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption

Rose Kiely, Group Overview & Scrutiny Manager

Amanda Simcox, Scrutiny Officer

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**1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chairman advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site ([www.civico.net/birmingham](http://www.civico.net/birmingham)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

**3. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors: Debbie Clancy, Diane Donaldson, Shabrana Hussain and Kerry Jenkins.

**4. ACTION NOTES**

(See document 1).

**RESOLVED:**

The action notes of the meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019 were confirmed.

## 5. ADOPTION AND FOSTERING

(See documents 2, 3 and 4).

Andy Couldrick, Chief Executive, Children's Trust introduced the item and Theresa Kane, Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption undertook the presentation.

- The Adoption and Fostering Services are inspected separately. This is because one of the unintended legal consequences of the Trust model nationally, is that the Fostering Service moves from the local authority to an independent fostering agency and the Adoption Service moves from the local authority to a voluntary adoption agency and both are subject to a different inspection regime.
- The outcome of the Ofsted Inspection for the Adoption Service was assessed as good overall.
- The outcome of the Ofsted Inspection for the Fostering Service was that it requires improvement to be good.

In discussion, and in response to Members' questions, the following were among the main points raised:

- There is a suite of plans that sit under the Development Plan and these can be made available to Members and could be used to test progress.
- With regards to possible school disturbance for children who are being adopted or fostered, Members were informed that:
  - They have a good relationship with the Virtual School.
  - There is a cross border gap when children move into or out of the local authority area. The statutory guidance and regulations state that the placing local authority retains responsibility for the child for three years past the order. The Council has commissioned from the Trust what is required under the statutory guidance. Therefore, if the Trust was to take on the responsibility for children who come into Birmingham then they would require more resources.
- There has always been uncertainty regarding the Adoption Support Funding (ASF) and that is why they have created in-house psychology within the service. They have also rolled out Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) to social workers. Carers are supported in the first instance by social workers, however if children need to they can refer to ASF.
- One of the critical priorities is to significantly increase the number of foster carers and adopters. There is a national shortage of BME adopters and they constantly work with these communities. They are also having a conversation with a "family finding organisation" and are exploring whether the Trust will pay a "finders fee" as they currently pay an inter-agency fee of £31,000 for adopters.
- Ofsted recognised the support the Trust provides to foster carers and adopters. For instance, therapeutic training is provided to adopters and they will roll this out to foster carers.

- The social workers will have up-to-date safeguarding training as this was highlighted as a weakness by Ofsted.
- Staff stability in the adoption service is higher than anywhere else in the Trust and staff stability in the fostering service is higher than other areas of the Trust, but not as high as the adoption service.
- If Members would like to have a session to discuss the Adoption and Fostering Services, and would like to gain a better understanding of the national picture, then the Trust can liaise with the Chair of the Trust as he is also the Chair of the National Adoption and Special Leadership Board.
- By the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019 the regulations and requirements from the Ofsted inspection have to be met. Ofsted will then make a decision as to whether they wish to come back; if they do not visit then they will likely come back in two years.
- The Trust can provide an updated picture from the Virtual School regarding the recent set of educational outcomes and Members may want to invite the Head of the Virtual School to a future committee meeting.
- The inability to recruit enough adopters has not been because they have not joined a Regional Adoption Agency.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive and the staff at the Children's Trust for the work they do and the achievements made. The Chief Executive stated he personally valued the challenge and support scrutiny has provided.

**RESOLVED:**

The Committee noted the update and requested:

- An updated picture from the Virtual School regarding the recent set of educational outcomes.

**6. WORK PROGRAMME**

(See document 5).

Members noted the work programme for the 2018/19 municipal year.

**7. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

None.

**8. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair informed Members that he had received three items of other urgent business from Cllr Yip. Unfortunately the Cabinet Member or officers could not attend for these:

- Travel Assist and ATG going into administration - Cllr Yip thought there were serious issues and substantial questions that need to be answered regarding how the Council came to be in this position. For instance: how the contract was re-tendered; how the contract was monitored; who had oversight and who made the decisions. It was also questioned whether there would be a review so lessons can be learned and people held to account if need be. The Chair informed Members that he had had a briefing and no child had been affected. However, the Administrators can give the Council five days notice and cancel the contract. It was agreed that a letter would be sent to the Cabinet Member so a meeting can be arranged when appropriate.
- The closing of the 14 Council Day Nurseries should have drawn to a close on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019 and Cllr Yip requested an update on this.
- Cllr Yip had concerns regarding the Travel Assistance Policy for 0-25 Year Olds in Education consultation.

**RESOLVED:**

- That a letter be sent to the Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing so a meeting can be arranged to discuss ATG and Travel Assist when appropriate.

**9. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**

**RESOLVED:**

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

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The meeting ended at 11.20 hours.