

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
Monday, 19 August 2024**

PRESENT – Councillors Gibson, McCaughran, Patel S and Raja.

ALSO PRESENT – Executive Member Councillor Julie Gunn, Deputy Youth MP Ethan Woods, Officers – Jo Siddle, Michelle Holt, Elizabeth Clarkson and Phil Llewellyn.

RESOLUTIONS

5 Welcome and Apologies

The Deputy Chair, Councillor Martin McCaughran, welcomed all present.

Apologies were received from the Chair, Councillor Sabahat Imtiaz, Councillors Imran Ahmed, Julie Slater, Mark Russell and Matthew Jackson, as well as from the Youth MP Zainab Shah and Deputy Youth MP Nadeem Iqbal.

6 Minutes of the last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record.

7 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

8 Youth MPs Update

The Deputy Youth MP updated the Committee on recent events and activities including:

- At last month's Young Blackburn with Darwen youth forum, training from the Beacon Trust regarding gambling harms. The Youth Forum were working in partnership with Public Health who had secured funding for young people to produce a video to highlight the negative impact gambling had on people their families and their communities.
- 15 young people from the leaving care forum, youth forum and the SEND Inclusion ASD youth club had participated in a 3-day residential to Water Park Coniston. The young people had a fantastic residential with many of the young people having not experienced staying away from home before and they also had the opportunity to learn new skills.
- The award of the first ever Gold by the Young Inspectors, which was awarded to the Earcroft Centre at Darwen following a recent inspection.
- Summer events and activities attended by Youth Forum members.
- Members complimented the Youth MP and Youth Forum on the excellent work undertaken.

9 Preparation for the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection and Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

A report and supporting presentation was submitted which gave details of the preparation for the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection and Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). Councillor Julie Gunn, Jo Siddle and Michelle Holt outlined the preparation for both inspections.

The last Special Educational needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection took place in June 2019 under a previous framework. Several areas of strength were noted along with some areas for development. Following the positive outcome from the last SEND inspection the next inspection was expected to take place in Autumn 2024.

The last Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) took place in early 2022, followed by a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in May 2023 with a focus on the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk in Blackburn with Darwen.

Furthermore, an ILACS Focused Visit took place in April 2024 on arrangements for our care leavers aged 18 to 25.

The inspection recognised the positive work and significant improvements for our Care Leavers stating there had been effective and focused action by senior leaders, elected members and partners to improve services for care leavers. Following the JTAI and Focus Visit a full ILACS inspection in early 2025 was expected.

In readiness for these inspections the Directorate was undertaking several ongoing actions to ensure the Council was prepared and inspection ready with a focus on:

- Data and Performance
- Quality Assurance
- Peer Reviews/External Scrutiny
- Internal Scrutiny/Corporate Assurance
- Staff Engagement

Jo Siddle advised that she was confident the Council was ready for the inspections, knew where it needed to improve, and that work was ongoing to make these improvements.

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions, which focussed on:

- Work with other agencies
- The approach to digital across multi-agency partners
- Commissioning costs and arrangements

Councillor Julie Gunn, Jo Siddle and Michelle Holt responded to the questions, advising that in terms of work with other agencies, there were different data systems, but one strategic vision, with fast escalation of issues.

In relation to the approach to digital across multi-agency partners, there had been improvements since 2022, with updates systems and an emphasis towards Power-Bi, which should be up and running towards the end of September 2024, with live data available, and plans for a services dashboard. Cases were triaged and then filtered to the correct partner agency.

Councillor Julie Gunn advised that £1M had been invested on Care Leavers, and noted the high cost of placements. Commissioning was the biggest cost, and market issues were an ongoing issue. It was noted that the Committee would be scrutinising commissioning arrangements at its next meeting.

The Committee thanked Councillor Gunn, Jo Siddle and Michelle Holt for the information presented, and before she left the meeting Councillor Gunn requested that thanks be placed on record for the work of Phil Llewellyn, who would shortly be leaving the Council after 24 years, and these thanks were echoed by the Committee.

The Committee considered any recommendations/next steps, noting that there was further work required on the digital approach with partners, and also with the Adults portfolio who were looking at similar matters and issues, and it may be worth connecting with them to avoid duplication.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed