

REPORT TO CABINET

19 September 2018

Subject:	Sandwell Children's Trust Update and Improvement Plan
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Simon Hackett - Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Director:	Executive Director of Children's Services – Lesley Hagger
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	 
Key Decision:	Yes
Forward Plan (28 day notice) Reference:	SMBC14/07/2018
Cabinet Member Approval and Date:	Leader Cllr Hackett
Director Approval:	Jan Britton Lesley Hagger
Reason for Urgency:	Urgency provisions do not apply
Exempt Information Ref:	Exemption provisions do not apply
Ward Councillor (s) Consulted (if applicable):	This is a boroughwide initiative
Scrutiny consultation:	Scrutiny have not been consulted
Contact Officer(s):	Lesley Hagger, Executive Director of Children's Service's Lesley_hagger@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Note the Children's Improvement Plan, attached in Appendix 1, as submitted to Ofsted.
2. Ratify the appointments to the Sandwell Children's Trust Board as set out in Appendix 3.
3. Note the update information on the early stages of the Sandwell Children's Trust.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the outcomes of the November Ofsted inspection, to seek approval of the Improvement Plan submitted to Ofsted and to consider details on the first few months of the Sandwell Children's Trust, in particular, focussing on establishing contract governance arrangements.

2 IMPLICATION FOR THE COUNCIL'S AMBITION

- 2.1 Sandwell Children's Trust aims to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families and improve social care practice. Therefore, the Trust will support the ambitions around caring for vulnerable children and families and helping the community feel safer.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Ofsted re-inspected Sandwell's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in November 2017 and reported on its findings on 19 January 2018. Ofsted rated the service as Inadequate.
- 3.2 In response, the Sandwell Children's Trust, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chief Executive (in the capacity as Acting Director of Children's Services) have developed and submitted an Improvement Plan to Ofsted, on behalf of the Council.
- 3.3 At its meeting of the 28 February 2018, Cabinet gave its approval to the contract between the Council and the Sandwell Children's Trust in order for the Trust to 'Go Live' on the 1st April 2018. The report provided Cabinet with information on a range of matters related to the Trust including on-going governance of the contract.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

Ofsted Inspection

- 4.1 In November 2017, Ofsted re-inspected Sandwell's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and reported on its findings on 19 January 2018. Ofsted rated the service as Inadequate and highlighted a number of areas for improvement.

Improvement Plan

- 4.2 On behalf of the Council, the Sandwell Childrens Trust developed an Improvement Plan, attached as Appendix 1, in response to the Ofsted findings. The Improvement Plan was developed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chief Executive (in the capacity as Acting Director of Children's Services).
- 4.3 The plan is based on eight key priorities which set out what the Trust aims to achieve, how it intends to do this and what good and better services will eventually look like. The plan is informed by Ofsted's recommendations following the November 2017 inspection, repeat recommendations from previous inspections and incorporates the Sandwell Children's Commissioner's key priorities from his diagnostic work undertaken whilst working with the Council. The eight key priorities are summarised below:
- 4.4 **Priority 1: Leadership.** Having strong leadership is pivotal in shaping and improving services for children and families and is the catalyst to transforming and delivering high quality services for children and young people
- 4.5 **Priority 2: Workforce.** Having a highly committed, child focussed workforce is essential in creating an environment where social work can flourish. These values alongside a shared goal of improvement are vital to the improvement journey.
- 4.6 **Priority 3: Practice.** The quality of practice is fundamental in improving the lives of children and their families in Sandwell. Good practice is fostered by strong leadership which develops a confident and competent workforce who place children at the centre of their work.
- 4.7 **Priority 4: Children Looked After.** This is a fundamental priority of the plan because as 'Corporate Parents' we have a duty to make sure that decisions about our children and young people becoming looked after are based on robust social work practice supported by a rigorous framework which facilitate safe, stable permanent placements which support and drive positive, sustainable outcomes where our children thrive and achieve.

- 4.8 **Priority 5: CSE, Exploitation, Missing & Trafficked.** CSE destroys lives and affects all our communities; and is recognised nationally as one of the most important challenges facing local agencies today. It has a serious long term and lasting impact on every aspect of a child's life including their health, physical and emotional wellbeing, educational attainment, personal safety, relationships and future life opportunities.
- 4.9 **Priority 6: Performance and Quality Assurance.** The Trust will use its Quality and Assurance systems and frameworks to create a structure for improvement which enables a shift in culture to drive passion for high quality practice
- 4.10 **Priority 7: Partnership.** Strong and effective partnerships are critical when transforming and improving children's services. Shared visions and values alongside a joined-up approach to tackling issues is fundamental if partnership approaches are to succeed.
- 4.11 **Priority 8: Voice and Experience of the Child.** This priority is central to the improvement plan given that the child's voice should thread through all the priorities. The importance of capturing and understanding the child's voice and experience is fundamental in ensuring that children are effectively supported and safeguarded.
- 4.12 The contract/partnership between the Council and the Trust includes a performance management framework which will underpin the objective to achieve an Ofsted rating of 'Requires Improvement' by 2020 and 'Good' by 2022. The Improvement Plan will form the basis of improvement activity of the Trust and the Council over the next two years with the aim of delivering their shared vision for children's social care in Sandwell.
- 4.13 Within the action plan for Priority 7: Partnership, the Executive Director of Children's Services has the responsibility for establishing a Strategic Children's Partnership by April 2019. This will enable all relevant partners to work together effectively to commission services for children, young people and their families. This work is on track.
- 4.14 On 1st August 2018, the Government published a revised version of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. This was in response to changed legislation within the Child and Social Work Act 2017 and impacts the way in which Local Safeguarding Children Board arrangements are organised. Partner agencies are meeting during August and September to consider the new guidance and make the required changes to coincide with the creation of the new Strategic Children's Partnership Board described above.

Sandwell Children's Improvement Board

- 4.15 Following the Sandwell Children's Commissioner completing his work with the Council, the Department of Education have established the Sandwell Children's Improvement Board. The Board has been established to provide leadership and challenge across the partnership and to drive forward sustainable improvements with the overall aim of improving outcomes for the borough's most vulnerable children and young people. The Board is made up of representatives from the Council, the Trust and other partner organisations which include the Sandwell Safeguarding Board, West Midlands Police and Sandwell & West Birmingham CCG. The Board is Chaired, on behalf of the Department of Education, by Paul Moffat, Chief Executive of the Doncaster Children's Trust. The Council is represented by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, the Chief Executive, the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Lifelong Learning & Education.
- 4.16 At the inaugural meeting of the Sandwell Children's Improvement Board, held on 17 April 2018, the Board approved the Improvement Plan prior to submission of the plan to Ofsted.

Ofsted Monitoring Visits

- 4.17 On the 30 and 31 May 2018 Ofsted undertook a monitoring visit to review the progress made in the areas of help and protection and children looked after, with a focus on the quality of social work assessments.
- 4.18 Attached as Appendix 2 is a letter from the Lead Inspector which summarises the findings of the monitoring visit.
- 4.19 A further monitoring visit is scheduled which falls between this report being written and the meeting. The visit focuses on 'Thresholds into Care for Looked After Children'. Cabinet will be given a verbal update at the meeting.

Contract Governance

- 4.20 As reported to Cabinet in February 2018, the contract with the Trust has a comprehensive programme of governance arrangements. The contract requires that the Executive Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive of the Trust meet on at least a monthly basis to consider performance and operational matters. In addition, each quarter, the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Chief Executive meet with the Chair of the Trust Board and the Chief Executive of the Trust, at a Strategic Partnership Board. The inaugural meeting of the Strategic Partnership Board successfully took place on 25 July 2018.

- 4.21 In accordance with the terms of the contract, whilst the Trust is providing the Council with monthly monitoring information, an initial 6 months grace period was agreed, which allows the Trust time to establish processes and governance arrangements before formal reporting commences.
- 4.22 The contract was signed by both parties with a view to agreeing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by the end of July 2018. The first Strategic Partnership Board agreed that the deadline should be extended to the end of September so that the new Executive Director of Children's Services would be able to fully participate in the determination of the KPIs and associated targets.
- 4.23 The Executive Director of Children's Services is currently creating a client management function, with the Manager's post currently out to recruitment. The client management function will support the DCS to monitor the performance, undertake audit activity and holding the Trust to account for the delivery of the contract.
- 4.24 The contract with the Trust specifies that representatives of the Trust should attend Council meetings when reasonably requested, specifically referencing attendance twice a year at Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board and at Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board each February. Trust representatives are scheduled to attend the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board on the 24 September 2018.

Support Services Agreement

- 4.25 Cabinet is aware that under a Support Services Agreement (SSA) the Council provides a range of support services to the Trust for an initial one year term (except for the leased cars service which has 3 year terms). The Trust and Council are currently undertaking a review of the services provided in order to determine future arrangements. Cabinet will be informed of the outcomes of the review in a future report.

Trust Board Membership

- 4.26 The Trust's Articles of Association require the Trust to obtain Council approval to certain reserved matters which were listed in the 28 February 2018 Cabinet Report. One of the reserved matters is the appointment of Board members.
- 4.27 The Trust Board operated in shadow form in the months before the commencement of the contract before moving to its current full status in March 2018. A number of appointments to the Board have been made by the Trust in that period. The current Trust Board membership is listed in Appendix 3.

4.28 Cabinet are asked to approve the appointment of Trust Board members listed in Appendix 3.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

5.1 The Children's Trust and the Council regularly meet via the Strategic Partnership Board to consider performance and operational matters.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 The report provides an update on the outcome of the Ofsted visit and the Improvement plan. No alternative options were required.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The overall contract sum for the provision of the service from the Trust is approximately £58.33m which has been incorporated in the Executive Director of Children's Services budget for 2018/19. Of this sum, the Council will receive back approximately £2.15m in payment for the support services provided under the Support Service Agreement and a further £0.63m will be received for the provision of office accommodation in the Wellman, Metsec and other buildings.

7.2 In addition to the contract sum the Trust is estimated to receive a further £5.14m from Grants and Partner Contributions, and DfE funding for irrecoverable VAT estimated at £1.66m in 2018/19.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 In accordance with the Trust's Articles of Association, the Council's approval is required for reserved matters which includes the appointment of Board members.

8.2 In accordance with the terms of the contract, the Trust will provide the Council with monthly monitoring information.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 An equality impact assessment is not required for this proposal. The aim of the Improvement Plan is to improve the lives for vulnerable children and families and improve social care practice.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 There are no data protection implications arising from the proposals.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 There are no crime or disorder implications arising from the proposals.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 Ongoing dialogue between the Trust and the Council will be undertaken to ensure the needs of vulnerable children and families are met.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 The Improvement Plan sets out how the Trust aim to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families in Sandwell.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 There is no direct impact to Council land or property as a result of the proposals.

15 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' – Department for Education

16 APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Sandwell Improvement Plan

Appendix 2 – Ofsted letter following monitoring visit 30/31 May 2018

Appendix 3 – Table of Trust Board Members

Lesley Hagger
Executive Director of Children's Services

Appendix 3

Members of the Sandwell Children's Trust Board

Name	Board Role	Professional Capacity
Rt Hon Jacqui Smith	Chair	Former Cabinet Minister
Cllr Paul Sanders	Council appointed Non-Executive Director	Elected member
Stuart Lackenby	Council appointed Non-Executive Director	Director of Prevention & Protection, SMBC
Stephen Rimmer	Non-Executive Director	Director of Impact and Learning, Barnardos
Linda Sanders	Non-Executive Director	Former Director of Children's Services
Vineeta Manchanda	Non-Executive Director	Senior Finance Manager
Frances Craven	Executive Director	Chief Executive, SCT
Dan Mortiboys	Executive Director	Director of Resources, SCT
Steven Gauntley	Executive Director	Director of Quality & Performance, SCT