

# COUNCIL

<b>DATE</b>	16 December 2021
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Chief Executive
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Governance of the Children's Services improvement agenda and further constitutional matters
<b>STATUS</b>	Open

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A report setting out proposals for councillor oversight of the children's services improvement agenda and further constitutional matters.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That a Children's Services Oversight Group is established, with the membership and terms of reference proposed in this report.
2. That a review of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements is commissioned on the basis set out in this report and that authority is delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive to consult with the political group leaders to confirm those councillors (limited to 5) who will lead the review.
3. That the membership of the Executive and Scrutiny Liaison Board is extended to include a councillor from each of the Opposition Groups.

### 1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

1.1 This report seeks approval to:

- (i) Establish a Children's Services Oversight Group (CSOG), replacing the previously established Improvement Board – and with a remit for oversight of the Children's Services improvement agenda, following the recent Ofsted inspection.
- (ii) Undertake a wider review of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, leading to recommendations to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Council, as part of the annual review of the constitution, that may arise.

1.2 The membership and terms of reference of the CSOG are proposed as follows:

- Leader
- Deputy Leader
- Portfolio Holder for Children and Education
- Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board
- Leader of the Labour Group (plus another member of the Labour Group)
- Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group
- Partner agency representatives (at least two)

### 1.3 Terms of Reference:

- To receive such reports as it directs from the Director of Children's Services in respect of the progress, implementation and impact of the Children's Services Improvement / Transformation Plan
- To receive such reports as it directs regarding the use and effectiveness of resources in Children's Services
- To make such recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education, the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive as it considers appropriate - without prejudice to the role, remit and functions of Full Council, the Cabinet or the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel
- Membership will be extended to include the Department for Education (DfE) appointed Commissioner and may also include co-opted representatives whose skills and experience strengthen and are complementary to those of CSOG.
- CSOG may extend invitations to other officers and partners with relevant skills, experience or expertise to attend the meeting
- CSOG will be the mechanism for reporting through the Commissioner to the DfE regarding progress and improvement
- CSOG will meet at least monthly

### 1.4 Further constitutional matters:

1.4.1 It is also considered timely for Full Council to consider commissioning a review of the Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements. The wider local government landscape and the continuing challenges presented by the pandemic merit consideration of the ongoing focus and operation of the scrutiny function. Major changes such as (but not exclusive to) the advent of statutory Integrated Care Systems and the re-emergence of the devolution agenda will add to the workload of councillors fulfilling a scrutiny role. A cross party councillor led review, supported by the Assistant Chief Executive (and statutory Scrutiny Officer) would enable Full Council to consider recommendations for modification or change at the AGM, as part of the annual review of the constitution.

1.4.2 In the meantime, it is also proposed that the membership of the Executive and Scrutiny Liaison Board is extended to include at least one councillor from each of the Opposition Groups.

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

2.1 Councillors have a key role to play in overseeing, scrutinising and challenging the improvement agenda in children's services.

## **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

3.1 It is considered that councillor engagement in the oversight of children's services improvement is essential.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no material financial implications directly arising from the recommendations in this report.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from the recommendations in this report.

#### **6. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None directly arising.

#### **7. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 All wards potentially affected.

#### **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1 None.

#### **9. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

9.1 Rob Walsh, Chief Executive

**Rob Walsh**

**Chief Executive**