

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 2 MARCH 2015 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.30 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Pauline Helliard-Symons (Chairman), Parry Bath (Vice-Chairman), Mark Ashwell, Lindsay Ferris, Bill Soane, Alison Swaddle and Chris Bowring

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Ian Pittock (Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services)

Officers Present

Judith Ramsden, Director, Children's Services
Brian Grady, Head of Strategic Commissioning, Children's Services
Alan Stubbersfield, Head of Learning and Achievement
Tricia Harcourt, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Gillian Ward, HR Business Partner (for Item 56)

49. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Ken Miall, (who was substituted by Chris Bowring) and Shahid Younis.

50. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 January 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A declaration of interest was submitted from Pauline Helliard-Symons who declared that she was going to be doing occasional consultancy work with CfBT Education Trust, the organisation which helps to run Oakbank Secondary and Evendons Primary schools.

52. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

53. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

**54. DELIVERING EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN -
UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGY**

The Committee received and considered a report circulated separately, giving an update on the impact of the recruitment and retention strategy for Social Workers, with specific details about the current recruitment campaign in Australia.

Gillian Ward, HR Business Partner, presented the report and explained that this overseas recruitment campaign had started as a result of a number of difficulties in recruiting experienced social workers, there is no problem in attracting those who are newly qualified. The Council is working with a recruitment agency/provider (Hays) who has worked with other Local Authorities. The advertising campaign began on 2 February and ends on 9 March, although the microsite will remain until the end of March. Following shortlisting, there will be interviews in Australia lead by the provider and then Skype interviews in London, with input from Borough Council staff, with appointments being made

in mid- April. From the interest shown so far it is anticipated that four appointments will be made.

The following points were made in response to Members questions:

- Relocation expenses will be at the same rate as in the UK, and will have to be paid back if the contract is not completed;
- A link to the provider's microsite will be provided for Members;
- Home grown talent is still being sought, and part of the strategy is to develop existing social workers with development of competencies and clear career progression;
- Social worker recruitment is a national problem, the Council has been strengthening links with Universities, which is beginning to make an impact;
- One of the problems of retention nationally is people leaving the profession, but Wokingham gives a good offer of training and career development. The problems are mainly in children's social work.
- The induction programme is being improved, with a formal buddying programme being planned.
- Currently there are 12 vacancies out of a planned workforce of 45, though the number changes. There is confidence that 45 is a sufficient number of social workers;
- It is cheaper recruiting in Australia than employing agency staff.

RESOLVED: That the update report on delivering effective safeguarding services for children focussing on the recruitment and retention strategy be noted, and that a further update be reported to the July meeting.

55. DELIVERING EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN - EARLY YEARS HELP AND INNOVATION PROJECT

The Committee received and considered a presentation from Brian Grady, Head of Strategic Commissioning, Children's Services, detailing the work being done on the Early Help and Innovations project. A copy of the presentation is attached.

Brain explained that Wokingham has been part of a pilot group of 10 Local Authorities involved in the national innovation programme lead by Professor Eileen Munro. The programme is around the development of a new way of working to safeguard children, which goes beyond intervention and is about anticipation and prevention. The work is about working with families in a multiagency approach, and redesigning services to meet their needs.

The programme's changes involve:

- radical service redesign to enable changed working practices with families;
- a workforce development package, building and retraining their skills and confidence to sustain new working practices and understand outcomes
- integrating interventions and pathways, developing a single operating model.

Implementation of the changes is led by managers close to the front line, and there needs to be political and senior management support to allow staff to work differently. The Children's Partnership is also taking a lead.

One of the new workstreams is Front Door – a triage system for child protection and health, with effective liaison with the Police and others.

The following points were made in response to Members' questions:

- the programme of work started about 18 months ago before we became part of the pilot. The model was evaluated at the end of 2014;

- the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to demonstrate that they are assured that the innovation programme is working and that the governance arrangements make sense;
- Suggest that the Thames Valley Police be invited to the July meeting to explain their contribution to the 'Front Door' initiative;
- A report on the impact of the Front Door initiative can be presented to the September meeting;
- There are a number of channels of communication with voluntary groups involved with children and families to encourage them to report potential problems and give them training and support. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is accountable for the key players;
- Currently there is a debate within the Children's Partnership and the LSCB around the issue of identification of potential problems pre-natal. This would involve GPs and Health Visitors in following up.
- Agencies have to account for what they do by recording and passing on information to health services/midwifery and social care to make risk assessment with multiagency involvement;
- Currently there are not enough issues checked around families; early identification and intervention requires confidence;
- There is workforce training programme for all staff including highlighting good practice and to give them confidence. Middle managers, also get management support/training;
- The pilot is managed by three consultants, and we have a monthly consultation with one of them then every second month there is a workshop with all three. We can also draw on additional expertise. Some things are being worked up for national distribution. We are being challenged to come up with ideas and solutions which can be tested and then reported.

RESOLVED: That the information received on the Early Help and Innovations Project as part of delivering effective safeguarding services for children be noted. The following updates be received at future meetings of the Committee:

- 1) The Thames Valley Police be invited to the July meeting to explain their contribution to the 'Front Door' initiative;
- 2) A report on the impact of the Front Door initiative be presented to the September meeting.

56. FUTURE ROLE OF WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL AS A PROVIDER OF STATUTORY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICES - UPDATE

It was reported that the Task & Finish group had met on 24 February 2015 when a report which drew together the parts of the information given by the two organisations and suggestions for possible changes in provision of service. Group Members discussed the report with input from the two representatives from the Primary Headteacher Association and the Secondary Federation.

The Group agreed that the report would be revised to include the comments made at the meeting, then circulated to the Group and Headteachers. The report will then be presented to the Executive Member for Children's Services as an advisory report for consideration when the development of future provision of services is considered.

57. SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE - OFSTED REPORTS

The Committee received and considered a report set out on Agenda pages 6 to 7, giving an overall picture of Ofsted inspection outcomes in the context of the improvement of schools. It was noted that of the 9 schools in Wokingham judged as 'requiring improvement' (RI) 8 were primary schools and one is a free school (academy). Local Authority Officers have been working with the RI primary schools and the majority are moving towards receiving a 'good' judgement this year. The RI free secondary school has declined Local Authority school improvement support, in favour of obtaining help via its commercial sponsor.

Copies of the summaries of recently published Ofsted reports, set out on Agenda pages 8 to 11 for the following schools were considered:

- Bearwood Primary School – overall rating 3 'requires improvement'; previous rating 2 'good'
- The Bulmershe School – an inspection of the school's use of alternative provision, which identified many strengths and a small number of areas for improvement related to that aspect of the school's work.

In relation the Bearwood, being down-graded, Alan Stubbersfield indicated that the School Improvement Officers are carrying out intensive work with the School, to work on the identified lines of action, so that at the first monitoring inspection, progress can be shown. It was noted that the Inspectors had judged that the governing body was not effective enough in holding leaders to account, and Officers gave assurance that the Governors were now taking up training.

Alan Stubbersfield explained that the inspection at Bulmershe was part of thematic set of inspections being carried out by Ofsted across the country, with the outcomes being drawn into a general report on the alternative provision of education.

The Chairman asked if at the next meeting the School Improvement/Ofsted report could include a list of all the Borough schools showing the date and outcome of their last inspection, and include Yatley and Edgebarrow Schools where many children living in the south of the Borough attend.

RESOLVED: That the general report on the context of Wokingham Schools' Ofsted experience; and the recently published Ofsted reports be noted.

58. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee received and considered an update on the sections of the Balanced Scorecard relating to the following headings: Keeping Children Safe; Narrowing the Gap; and Opportunity for All, as set out in the report on Agenda pages 12 to 17.

It was noted that Indicator 5 – *Safeguarding % of children subject to a Child Protection Plan for the second, or subsequent time* was red. In December 2014.

The explanation given in the report that the indicator can show significant swings between months due to the low number of children/families involved was accepted. There is an expectation that this indicator will return to green before the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED: That the Children's Services performance indicators be noted.

59. COMMITTEE'S FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Forward Programme of work set out on Agenda pages 18 to 21, and agreed the following amendments:

- July – change date to 21 July - add a report from the Thames Valley Police on their contribution to the Front Door work stream in the Early Help and Innovations programme;
- September – a follow up report on the impact of the Early Help and Innovations programme;
- October – a report on the impact of the Apprenticeship programme.