MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2015 FROM 7.30PM TO 8.30PM

Present:- Pauline Helliar-Symons (Chairman), Mark Ashwell, Chris Bowring (substitute for Bill Soane), Lindsay Ferris, and Alison Swaddle

Also present:-
Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Executive Member for Children's Services
Ian Pittock, Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services

Officers:
Judith Ramsden, Director of Children's Services
Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning & Achievement, Children's Services
Felicity Budgen, Interim Head of Social Care and Intervention, Children's Services
Tricia Harcourt, Senior Democratic Services Officer

PART I

38.   MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 November 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39.   APOLOGIES
Apologies for absence were submitted from Parry Batth, Bill Soane, (who was substituted by Chris Bowring) and Shahid Younis.

40.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Pauline Helliar-Symons 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.

41.   PUBLIC QUESTION TIME
There were no public questions.

42   MEMBER QUESTION TIME
There were no Member questions.

43.   DELIVERING EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN - UPDATE
The Committee received and considered a report, set out on Agenda pages 6 to 10, giving an update on delivering effective safeguarding services which focussed on the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention strategy for social workers.

Felicity Budgen presented her report and highlighted, that there were still challenges in recruiting and retaining social workers in both the local and national markets. The Children's Social Care Team had developed a strategy for recruiting, developing and retaining professionally qualified, skilled and motivated social workers, to provide stability and consistency of service. The strategy, as detailed on Agenda pages 8 and 9, was developed following a review of salaries, benefits and caseload, carried out in consultation

with staff. It has been in place for six months and things have improved, as shown by the turnover rates and recruitment results detailed in the report.

The following points were made in response to Members' questions:
- In the past, the high turnover of social workers had affected the quality of service provided, because of a lack of continuity, although there were some very good agency social workers;
- It was a very difficult market, with staff moving to agencies, which was why the Service is putting a lot of effort into recruitment and retention;
- The consultation with staff when developing the strategy involved focus groups, and much of the strategy followed from the ideas they suggested. There were also exit interviews with those leaving; and follow up on people who expressed an interest in job adverts, but did not apply for the job;
- The main reasons for leaving/not applying were around salary levels (adjoining authorities and agencies pay more); high housing costs, travel and child care costs;
- There is still an issue in recruiting senior/experience social workers, so work has begun with a recruitment company to select social workers in Australia;
- The recruitment company has been recommended by other local authorities and although there may be some additional costs in the recruitment process, this will be outweighed by the reduction in costs by not having to use agency social workers;
- The legal and educational/professional framework in Australia is very similar to that in the UK;
- They will be offered 2/3year and, possibly up to 5year contracts; relocation expenses will be paid, but limited to the same level as if the move was within the UK;
- The turnover has improved, but there is still some way to go, but with the new package of revised salary levels and a clear progression scheme; good supervision; a high quality training/ professional development programme; and smaller caseloads, the expectation is that within the next six months the situation will be further improved.

RESOLVED: That the update report on delivering effective safeguarding services for children focussing on the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention strategy be noted, and further updates on the recruitment and retention strategy be provided at the Committee's meetings in March and July.

## 44.	FUTURE ROLE OF WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL AS A PROVIDER OF STATUTORY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICES
It was reported that the Future Services Task and Finish Group had met on 19 November 2014 and 13 January 2015, when representatives from organisations which provide different models of school improvement services attended: Herts for Learning and Southend Education Trust.

A further meeting had been arranged for 24 February 2015 to discuss suggestions for possible changes to the provision of services in Wokingham.

## 45.	WOKINGHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD'S REPORT – EFFECTIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
This item was withdrawn from the agenda, as there had been a misunderstanding about the availability of such a report. The Committee had received the full annual report of the Wokingham Safeguarding Children Board at its meeting in September 2014.

46. SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE – OFSTED REPORTS

The Committee received copies of the summaries of recently published Ofsted inspection reports, set out on Agenda pages 11 to 18:

- Hawkedon Primary School –overall rating 2 'good'; previous rating 2 'good
- All Saints Primary School – outcome of the first monitoring inspection following judgement in July 2014 that the school required improvement. Effective action being taken to tackle areas requiring improvement; further actions suggested.
- Rivermead Primary School – overall rating 2 'good'; previous rating 3'requires improvement'
- Emmbrook Junior School - overall rating 2 'good'; previous rating 3'requires improvement

It was noted that all the reports had made good comments about governing bodies. Also that the recent major building works and expansion of Hawkedon had not adversely affected the school's good rating. Members were pleased to see that Rivermead and Emmbrook schools had improved and had now achieved a 'good' rating; and that at All Saints Primary, which had been assessed as 'requiring improvement', action had been taken to make the required improvements, with only one further action remaining.

RESOLVED: That the recently published Ofsted reports be noted.

47. 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 circulated separately.

It was noted that Indicator 6 - *Safeguarding: % of referrals that are repeat referrals to Children's Social Care* was still red.
The detailed explanation given in the report that this was a technical issue around reporting arrangements was accepted.

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

48. COMMITTEE'S FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the forward Programme of work set out on Agenda pages 58 to 61, and agreed to the following amendments:

- March and July - add an update on the progress of the recruitment and retention strategy to Effectiveness of Safeguarding Services report;
- March – include in the update from the Future Services Task & Finish Group, a draft of recommendations from the investigation;
- March – add a report on the implementation of the Special Education Needs and Disability Reforms.

These are the Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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