

Please note: Amendments were made to these minutes at the meeting held on 4 November 2013

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2013 FROM 7.00PM TO 9:15PM**

*Present:- Pauline Helliar-Symons (Chairman), Ian Pittock (Vice-Chairman), Parry Bath, Ken Miall, Sam Rahmouni, Bob Wyatt and Shahid Younis.*

*Parent Governor Representative: Karen Knight.*

*Also present:- Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Executive Member for Children's Services, Pauline Maddison, Interim Strategic Director, Children's Services, Martin Baker, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement, Judith Ramsden, Head of Safeguarding and Social Care, Susan Coulter Senior Democratic Services Officer.*

*Stephen Barber, Chairman, Wokingham Safeguarding Children Board for Items 17 and 19  
Chief Inspector Rob France for Item 19.*

**PART I**

**11. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 June 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**12. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Andrew Bradley, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Mike Gore, Malcolm Richards, and David Sleight.

**13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**14. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

**15. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

**16. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION – PREVENTION OF GROOMING OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Committee received and considered a verbal report from Chief Inspector Rob France on the actions being taken to prevent the grooming of young people.

The Chief Inspector advised the Committee that Grooming took many forms and was presented in young people in different ways, such as criminal behaviour and going missing and having to be returned by the Police. The case in Oxford was discussed and the Chief Inspector advised that the same thing could happen anywhere. However, Berkshire was developing a strategy to share information with local Police Commanders. A team of officers would be led by a Detective Inspector. The Partnership was Berkshire-wide and had established a child exploitation sub-group which discussed health etc to identify young people who may be at risk.

A Member asked if there was a pattern or if the problem was more prevalent in cities or in suburban areas. He was advised that the largest case had been in Waring where there

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had been 100 victims with 200 potential offenders. Wherever there was a high concentration of people, then the risk was higher.

A Member asked if young people were interviewed when they had been returned after running away and how many young people were affected. The Chief Inspector advised that young received a safe and well interview after their return but he did not have numbers to hand. He stressed the importance of understanding how to safeguard children.

Members were keen to know what Wokingham was doing to recognise the problem at an early stage. The Chief Inspector advised that officers had to work on the basis that this sort of abuse could happen anywhere. Children of a certain age go missing and learning had to be taken from other places, such as schools and the medical services, to understand the problem. Officers would not be satisfied until they knew what was going on with a child.

A Member asked if the Police were confident that they had learned lessons from the Oxfordshire case and were they implementing measures to ensure that it does not happen in Wokingham. He was advised that prevention of abuse could not be guaranteed. The various agencies need to respond to the indicators presented. The Police had learned from previous cases. Information was shared and could be included as part of the risk assessment process. Potential partners have been identified, such as clinics and healthcare professionals, GPs and Pharmacists. It was important to have a multi-faceted approach to learning and by looking at patterns of young people going missing and trying to find out where they go.

The Chairman asked if the Police felt that they received the right support from Councillors, GPs and schools etc. She was advised that the Police felt very well supported. This problem was an on-going challenge.

Judith Ramsden advised that the LSCB had started funding a school based drama play to try and highlight the issue. Stephen Barber advised that the play was being promoted and it was hoped that schools would take up the initiative. The Health and Wellbeing Board had also discussed the issue with the Safeguarding Children's Board. The Committee was also advised of a Dispatches programme which was being shown on BBC Television.

Karen Knight asked where would someone go to report abuse if they felt it was happening. There were so many different agencies, it was difficult to know who to approach. She was advised that any of the agencies could be approached. Social Services had a poster campaign which highlighted what to do if someone was concerned about a child. If the Police were approached, then they would contact Judith Ramsden's team so it could be dealt with. All of the agencies shared information so it did not matter who was first approached as the information would be forwarded accordingly.

The Chairman advised that she felt very reassured that that information sharing was taking place. She asked if the Council had records to show that it had done everything it could in the circumstances. She was advised that the Council did have records and they were available for scrutiny, if necessary.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Inspector for attending the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That the information presented above be noted.

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## **17. LISTENING TO THE CHILDREN'S VOICE**

The Committee received and considered a verbal update from Pauline Maddison on the progress of the Children and Young People's Engagement Strategy.

The Committee was advised that modelling was still going on and the Strategy would be gradually introduced. The Strategy would ensure that all services within the Council will listen to the children's voice. The next step was to look at what partner agencies were doing. A report would be presented to the Committee in the Autumn of next year. Annual monitoring arrangements were in place and on course at the moment. It was proposed that the Committee receives a report on the matter every Autumn.

The Committee was advised that it had been discussed by the Corporate Management Team that every committee report should have a box in it to show what impact the proposal will have on children and the elderly. A positive response had been received but the Directors felt that the Council should show how the customer has been consulted and how they have been impacted upon. Pauline referred to the "Improving the Customer Experience" which outlined the Council's response to the Government's Channel Strategy. The committee report format was currently being looked at.

Members were concerned that there may be a danger that the process would just look at the average customer and not specifically include the elderly, young and disabled. Pauline advised that Children's Services would build their management arrangements into every directorate and be reporting to the Committee how the child's voice was being listened to. Ofsted, Children in Care and school inspections also played a part. It was key that other directorates are signed up.

A Member asked that when the report was available, would it contain what the children had said the Committee was advised that it would. Members were also concerned that every group of children was reached. The Committee was advised that it could not be guaranteed that every child was reached. Officers were looking at a mechanism to engage with schools and the school councils. Work was being carried out on a cross phase Teacher advisory group to look at things which were on the top of the agenda, such as the Children's Voice. Most Councils who had strategies also had very interesting and interactive websites and offered protective social media for children.

In terms of a timeframe, the Committee was advised that the modelling would be complete by January 2014 and monitoring of young people's services would be in place by April 2014. It was expected that the project would be well advanced by 2015.

A Member advised that charities were already doing interactive work. He asked if the Council was behind. He was advised that it was but that Ofsted had picked up the issue last November during its inspection. Officers had declared it in their self-assessment and compared to London Borough Councils, which had their own team of staff and delegated budgets for young people, the Council was behind. The Council therefore needed to change its culture so that young people wanted to be engaged.

**RESOLVED:** That the update on the progress of the Children and Young People's Engagement Strategy be noted.

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## **18. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WOKINGHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD 2012/13**

The Committee received and considered Wokingham Safeguarding Children Board's Annual Report for 2012/13, which was circulated separately. The report included the proposed Business Plan for 2013/14.

The Chairman advised that she would have liked to have seen more on achievements in the last 6 years.

Stephen Barber, Chairman of the Wokingham Safeguarding Children Board, presented the report. He explained that the Board worked with sub-groups and reports were set out at the end of the document.

He drew Members' attention to the following sections of the report

- Page 24 – Child Sex Exploitation and Missing Children Task and Finish Group;
- Page 10 – Learning and Improvement – this not only explored the particular case but looked to see if the case could be handled better in the future, leading to a protocol between social care and mental health. A case review was being conducted and this would be included in the next annual report. A lot of work had been undertaken with regards to the reorganisation of the health service. The Board had spoken to the CCG boards: 3 in West Berkshire and 1 in Wokingham. The latest achievement was that a designated Doctor was now in place and they had attended a case review last week. There were also criminal justice related issues, such as MARA, which processed domestic abuse.
- Page 23 WSCB Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-Group – some audits had been conducted and led by the Healthcare Trust;
- Pages 12 and 13 – Children's Social Care had had its own audit. The Board had further development to do and new guidance was now available on the Safeguarding Boards and annual reports. This would be reported next year. The Youth offending service had received their report last week which had also addressed safeguarding requirements;
- The Family First programme had been commended last week;

The Chairman was concerned that the degree at which information was shared between social workers and schools was not set out in the report and she raised the recent case of Daniel Pelka as an example. Stephen advised that there were a number of issues that needed to be worked on, in particular, improving communications between teachers and social services. In Daniel's case, the school did not know enough about domestic abuse or the child's background and there was no robust process in place and record keeping was poor. It was important that the Council learned from this case.

Members asked why, if a teacher knew there was a problem, they did not report it. Stephen explained that some teachers are afraid to, in case there is a confrontation with the parent(s). Sometimes teachers do report their concerns and refer the child to the relevant authorities.

Martin Baker explained that individual teachers received training and support so it would be expected that they would be able to cope with having a difficult discussion with parents.

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It was agreed that a copy of this report be presented to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee as it had indicated that it had not received enough information on safeguarding children.

The Chairman thanked Stephen Barber for his report and requested that the next report should contain a larger section on the service's achievements.

**RESOLVED:** That;

- 1) the 2012/13 Annual Report of the Wokingham Safeguarding Children Board be noted; and
- 2) the report be presented to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

## **19. SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) REVIEW – DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR SEN PROVISION**

The Committee received and considered a report set out on Agenda pages 6 to 11, detailing the proposals for Special Education Needs (SEN) provision in light of the recent review.

The Chairman asked how much money needed to be saved. She was advised that this was not known at the moment. There were a number of key challenges in terms of the allocation of resources, depending on the feedback from the schools consultation.. Funding for schools comes from a dedicated school fund. In the first year, it was possible that the benefits would not be seen, but that these may be seen in the long term. The report had also been considered by the Schools Forum earlier in the day. Members were concerned that the level of service was being changed and that residents may not receive a good service. They were advised that they would in fact receive a better service. A model had been established that improved the chances of young people. Secondary school provision needed to be met in a more cost effective way. Primary school needs were more complex and had improved from a few years ago.

**RESOLVED:** That the development proposals for Special Needs Provision be noted.

## **20. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND OFSTED REPORTS**

### **Ofsted Reports**

The Committee received and considered an updated list of Ofsted inspection outcomes for schools in the Borough and adjoining authorities, set out on Agenda pages 12 to 17. It was noted that since the last meeting of the Committee, several further schools' Ofsted inspections had been published. The outcome of only one school, Colleton, had gone down with the rest remaining the same as their last inspection.

The Interim Assistant Director Learning & Achievement and Community Support advised that paragraph 1.6 on page 17 provided a pattern of provision, which was important as it enabled Members to see the overall picture.

The Chairman requested that the report be redesigned to show that where a school had improved or had its inspection rating reduced, the report show what the previous rating had been, as well as the current one. Karen Knight stated that it would be helpful if the report had 2 or 3 bullet points showing the key points, setting out why there had been a

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change. It was agreed that a table for each category, with grades, be included in the summary of future reports

It was agreed that subject to the above changes, for future reports, the report be noted.

### **School Performance**

The Committee received and considered the provisional report giving a summary of the overall results for Wokingham schools across the whole age range of assessments, tests and examinations at the end of the academic year 2012/13, as set out on Agenda pages 18 to 37. The results for each stage in the Provisional Wokingham School Performance 2013 were considered, and comments made as follows:

**Early Years Foundation Stage-** Martin Baker advised that while it was difficult to provide an overall judgment until the data is confirmed and national comparisons are available, writing was the weakest area, followed by numbers and reading. The Early Years team will prioritise these areas as part of their work with schools, settings and child-minders in 2013/14.

**Key Stage 1** – At Level 2+ there is a 3 year rising trend in all subjects, but as in the EYFSP, writing is the weakest subject. Further, at Level 3+, while there is a 3 year rising trend, writing is still significantly lower than the other subjects, There is a 4 year rising trend for reading and mathematics.

**Key Stage 2** – At both Level 4+ and 5+, while the overall performance in Wokingham has improved, the gap for pupils eligible for free school meals has widened. This continues to present a challenge, both in local terms and relative to the national picture. A priority focus of work in 2013/14 will relate to the LA monitoring the effective use of schools' pupil premium finances in order to reduce the gap between the performance of those pupils eligible for FSM and those not.

**Key Stage 3** - Girls have once again outperformed boys in English. The gap between them from the provisional 2013 results is 4 percentage points although the gap has reduced from 9 percentage points in 2010.

**Key Stage 4** – Wokingham's schools have improved their results with the percentage of young people achieving 5 A\*-C grades, including maths and English, rising from 65.7% to 71.8%.

**Key Stage 5** – For A\* and A grades, Wokingham's schools have shown an improvement of 1.0 percentage points since last year (from 25.9% to 26.9%), at a time when the national figures have shown a reduction of 0.3 percentage points. Looking at grades A\* to C, our schools have shown a marked improvement; not only has their performance improved by 2.4 percentage points (from 79.2% to 81.6%), but they are now 4.4 percentage points above the national average compared to 2.6 last year.

A Member asked if statistics were available on the percentage of young people in Wokingham who went to university. Martin Baker advised that at age 16, Wokingham had the lowest progression rate. Tracking was now easy as it was based on residency but he would try to find the information. The Chairman requested that if the information was available, it be reported to the next meeting of the Committee. Pauline Maddison advised that Ofsted would want to know what the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was doing about Narrowing the Gap. A report was meant to be in the agenda for this evening's

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meeting but a report would be presented to the next meeting. Pauline also advised that there was a Narrowing the Gap Working Group.

**21. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Committee received and considered the table and commentary, set out on Agenda pages 38 to 43, detailing the new set of Children's Services Performance Indicators

**RESOLVED:** That the Children's Services Performance Indicators report be noted.

**22. COMMITTEE'S FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Forward Programme of work as set out on Agenda pages 44 to 48, and following decisions made above agreed that the following amendments be made:

**RESOLVED:** That a report be brought to the next meeting of the Committee on Statistics on the Percentage of Young People in Wokingham who go to university (if the information is available).

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

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