

Please note: amendments were made to these minutes at the meeting held on 3 March 2014

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 13 JANUARY 2014 FROM 7.00PM TO 8:35PM**

*Present:- Pauline Helliar-Symons (Chairman), Ian Pittock (Vice-Chairman),
Andrew Bradley, Abdul Loyes, Ken Miall, Sam Rahmouni, and Shahid Younis*

Karen Knight, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:-

*Pauline Maddison, Interim Strategic Director, Children's Services
Martin Baker, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement
Judith Ramsden, Head of Safeguarding and Social Care
Tricia Harcourt, Senior Democratic Services Officer*

PART I

34. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 November 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

35. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Parry Bath (substituted by Abdul Loyes) and Bob Wyatt.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

37. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

38. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

**39. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN REVIEW – MONITORING OF
RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee received and considered a report set out on Agenda pages 6 to 67 giving an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Looked After Children Review, agreed in November 2011. *Looked After Children (LAC) are now referred to as Children in Care (CiC)*

The actions carried out in relation to each of the recommendations were set out in a table on pages 8 to 12, which made reference to the following documents attached as appendices:

1. Report to Corporate Parenting Board 11.12.12
2. Report to Corporate Parenting Board 26.11.13
3. Ofsted Report on WBC Fostering Service 08.01.13
4. Wokingham Children in Care Pledge
5. Wokingham Pledge for Care Leavers
6. Children's Services Foster Carers Charter

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Officers gave the following responses to Members' questions on specific recommendations:

- b) 15 – there has been much improvement in the communication with the Children in Care (CiC) and the Headteacher for CiC (formerly referred to as the Virtual Headteacher);
- d) 4 – there is a piece of work being done with Social Care and Housing to support Care Leavers;
- Care Leavers – they do have access to support until they are 24 and there are plans in place to look at strengthen provision;
- a) 1 and 2 – although Officers cannot be sure that in all schools the staff members with responsibility for Children in Care make themselves known to the CiC, because such information is not collected; this is promoted by Officers and they are confident that the Headteacher for CiC talks to the children when he visits schools. Officers were requested to ask schools if these things now happen, understanding that they may not all respond;
- b) 7 – Foster Carers now have various ways of feeding back on things that happen, through the Foster Carers Forum, representation on Corporate Parenting Board and through their routine independent reviews. In the Ofsted inspection of Fostering Services, this issue was marked as 'good';
- c) 3 – the protocol for Foster Carers to contact Ward Councillors is more about pointing out that they can approach Councillors if they want to, not that Councillors should know and approach the Foster Carers. The Corporate Parenting Board is the formal contact with Councillors and receives regular feedback from the Fostering Service. The Foster Carers Panel is independent of the Council and the Wokingham Borough Fostering Agency has a complaints process;
- e) 1 – the Tenant Services Report in April 2014 on how Care Leavers needs are considered and the impact of new arrangements will be reported to Corporate Parenting Board and referenced in its report to the Scrutiny Committee;
- e) 2 – Officers were confident that within the Housing Service there was a strong infrastructure in place and recognition of the importance of CiC and Care Leavers which would withstand any staff changes;
- e) 4 – Officers will circulate contact details of the furniture recycling scheme;

In relation to comments made in the answers to the 2012 Children in Care questionnaire on the Pledge on Agenda page 23, about laptops, Officers confirmed that now all secondary age CiC are given a laptop which is theirs to keep, and they are looking at the possibility of giving laptops to older primary age CiC as well.

Following comments made in the responses to the 2012 CiC questionnaire, the Children in Care Council decided that the Pledge was not fully meeting the needs of Care Leavers, so prepared a Care Leavers Pledge. Corporate Parenting Board has indicated that CiC should not have to leave their placements at 18, and should have access to support up to the age of 24.

The Chairman congratulated Officers and the Corporate Parenting Board for the progress in the provision of services for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Foster Carers that had been made in the two years since the Scrutiny review.

RESOLVED: That the report detailing the implementation of the recommendations of the Looked After Children Review be noted.

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40. PROGRESSION OF 16 PLUS PUPILS

The Committee received and considered a report, set out on Agenda pages 68 to 70, giving details of how pupils progress after the age of 16.

Martin Baker presented the report and referred to the information in the tables of 'destination data' gathered by the Raising Participation Partnership for the pupils in the 2009/10 cohort showing where students in Wokingham schools went after finishing Key Stage 4.

Martin pointed out that this information was collected from a group of pupils who were not covered by the statutory rise in the age of participation in education. He also said that the information was related to pupils at schools and colleges in the Borough. This meant that information about all young people resident in the Borough is not captured because a significant number of them attended schools in adjoining Local Authorities.

Table 4a showed that of the 1820 young people in the cohort, 89% went to or remained in an education destination. Table 4b showed that 790 of those young people entered an A Level or equivalent qualification. Table 4c showed that 60% of them had then gone into Higher Education.

Confirmation was given that, there are no Sixth Form Colleges in the Borough as each secondary school has its own sixth form. Ian Pittock indicated that he had been made aware that some Headteachers were struggling to provide a full range of courses in their sixth forms and that consideration was being given the possibility of pooling resources to set up a centre of excellence.

Comment was made that the percentage of young people going into apprenticeships was low at 4%, and was there anything that could be done, bearing in mind the number of engineering companies in the area. Pauline Maddison said that this was being looked at particularly in relation to the skills required for the construction industry in the future as there are several big planned developments in the Borough. Charlotte Haitham Taylor said that now there was a better offer there were higher numbers applying for apprenticeships. Recently there had been a Careers fair which had included a big push by local firms offering apprenticeships. An update on the number of apprenticeships could be produced for a meeting in the autumn.

Martin Baker said that in the past there had not been consistent messages about alternative post 16 qualifications, but now these are beginning to emerge.

Comment was made that the percentage of young people going to Oxford, Cambridge and Russell Group universities seemed low and did this indicate that some of the able children were being fully stretched. Members suggested that it may be because although they apply, they don't get places and the as many of the many of the most able students go to the grammar schools in adjoining authorities, so they get the credit. It was also pointed out that there are many very good universities which are not 'Russell Group' and that perhaps local young people chose to go to Reading University which is near home.

RESOLVED: That the report on the progression of 16 plus pupils be noted and that an update on numbers of young people taking up apprenticeships be reported to a meeting in the autumn.

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41. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND OFSTED REPORTS

The Committee received and considered a report set out on Agenda pages 72 to 79, giving summaries of recently published Ofsted reports for the following schools:

- The Bulmershe School – overall rating 2 ‘good’, previous rating 3 ‘satisfactory’
- Walter Infant School – overall rating 1 ‘outstanding’, previous rating 1 ‘outstanding’
- Emmbrook Infant School – overall rating 2 ‘good’, previous rating 2 ‘good’

The following Ofsted reports of the Social Care Inspection of residential provision at the following schools were also included:

- Southfield Special School – residential provision - overall rating 2 ‘good’
- High Close School (Barnardos) –residential provision - overall rating 1 ‘outstanding’

The Committee noted that Bulmershe School had improved its rating and congratulated the School on the improvement that had been made, particularly by the new Headteacher. The report commented that the Headteacher, senior leaders and governors had taken actions which had made improvements across the school since the last inspection. Shahid Younis who is a Governor at Bulmershe confirmed that the Governing Body had done a lot of work to bring in best practice, and there was now strong leadership.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor said that the recent investment made in the school buildings had helped the improvements and made pupils proud of their school. Sam Rahmouni commented that now there is an increasing local ambition to go to the school, so it is becoming more popular.

Pauline Maddison pointed out that now all of the secondary schools in the Borough had been rated as ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ and that made the Borough one of only 10 Local Education Authorities where that happens.

RESOLVED: That the recently published Ofsted reports on school performance and social care residential inspections be noted.

42. CHILDREN’S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee received and considered the sections of the Balanced Score Card relating to the following headings: ‘Keeping Children Safe; Narrowing the Gap; and Opportunity for All.

The Committee noted that the one indicator marked as red – 7b ‘*Safeguarding: % of core assessments completed within 35 working days*’ – and that this indicator has now been superseded since the implementation of the single assessment process.

Although the ‘Narrowing the Gap’ and ‘Opportunity for All’ indicators were not reported his time, Pauline Maddison reported that in relation indicator 10 – ‘*Key Stage 2 attainment: the gap between the performance of those children eligible for Free School Meals and their peers*’ - currently the gap was the widest in the country; although the percentage figures are affected by the small number of schools in the Borough. She went on to say that work is continuing to address this issue including:

- a conference for schools with national experts in the effective use of the Pupil Premium;

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- the School Improvement Officers are concentrating on the measures being used to track attainment;
- talking to groups of schools on how they can improve parental support, particularly with reading;
- the continuation of an Officer/Member 'Narrowing the Gap' Working Group;
- plans for a publicity campaign across the Borough to raise awareness of the issue and encourage everyone's involvement in how to help, particularly parents.

Pauline went on to say that Ofsted had indicated that what has been planned is outstanding, but the effects would not be seen for 12 to 18 months.

Karen Knight mentioned that as governors they had been increasing their questioning and challenge about the gap in attainment. They had become involved in volunteering at school, and were planning parents' meetings to raise awareness and explain how to help.

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

43. COMMITTEE'S FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Forward Programme of work as set out on Agenda pages 84 to 88, and following decisions made above agreed that the following amendments be made:

- autumn meeting – an update on numbers of apprenticeships;
- summer 2015 – further report on 16 plus destinations.

The Chairman mentioned that, now that appointments were being made to the new senior management structure of the Council, this might be the last meeting for Pauline Maddison and Martin Baker who had taken on their roles on an interim basis. They were both thanked for the contribution they had made.

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

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