

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2016 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.10 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Shahid Younis (Vice-Chairman), Laura Blumenthal, Richard Dolinski, Lindsay Ferris, Ken Miall, Bill Soane and Alison Swaddle

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Charlotte Haitham Taylor

Officers Present

Luciane Bowker, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Paul Feven, Interim Head of Strategic Commissioning
Lisa Humphreys, Head of Social Care and Intervention
Judith Ramsden, Director of Children's Services
Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director of Learning and Achievement

In the absence of the Chairman the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Shahid Younis took the Chair.

12. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons.

13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 June 2016 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the correction below, and signed by the Chairman:

Under item 7 – Children's Services Performance Indicators, where it said that *Maiden Erlegh had received a letter from the Government praising their work in narrowing the gap* it should say Maiden Erlegh had received an **award** from the Government praising their work in narrowing the gap.

14. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Bill Soane declared a personal interest on the basis that his daughter works at the Coombes School and his grandchild attends the Coombes School.

15. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

16. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

Councillor Lindsay Ferris expressed his discontentment with the fact that four items in the agenda were marked 'to follow'. Councillor Ferris felt that it was not acceptable to receive so many late reports, and was not prepared to listen to the offer of an explanation. In light of the fact that he did not feel that the meeting should continue on this basis Councillor Ferris left the meeting.

Following Councillor Ferris departure Judith Ramsden, Children's Services Director apologised for the delayed papers and explained that there had been an issue with colleagues waiting for her return from annual leave to finalise the reports. These had also

been a period of staffing transition. Judith offered to hold individual meetings with Members to work through any concerns regarding the reports.

The Chairman stated that the point raised by Councillor Ferris was valid and justified; he suggested that perhaps next time items with 'to follow' reports should be taken off the agenda. The Chairman asked Members if they wished to accept the late reports on this occasion. The Committee decided that it would be useful to have a general overview of the late reports. It was agreed that should any questions arise after reading the papers, this could be dealt with by Members emailing the Officers directly.

17. MASH UPDATE, MARAC PLAN, MAPPA BRIEFING

The Committee received a report which was set out in Agenda pages 13-21. The report contained information about the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

Lisa Humphreys, Head of Social Care and Intervention explained that the MASH programme had been implemented earlier in the year and continued to function well, the feedback received from partners remained positive. The strategic MASH group had now transformed from a project implementation group to a governance group meeting quarterly. This group monitored the multi professional strategic issues and data quality relating to the performance of MASH and Wokingham's links to the Pan Berkshire project.

During the discussion of the item the following points were made:

- In response to a question Lisa stated that the data contained in the MASH report could be made more detailed, but it would make it more difficult to interpret;
- Lisa informed Members that Wokingham MASH results were in line with other Berkshire authorities;
- Lisa confirmed that Wokingham MASH was also proportionately in line with other MASH systems nationally. However, the system varied slightly from authority to authority;
- In response to a question Lisa stated that the Police had access to ViSOR (a central database for storing information) as part of MAPPA. Wokingham Borough Council did not have access to ViSOR, but did receive automatic real time confidential notifications;
- Lisa explained that MARAC consisted of a panel of local agencies and varied between statutory bodies such as Police, Probation, Housing Departments, Health agencies, Social Services, Education to bodies such as locally commissioned domestic abuse service providers and voluntary bodies such as charities. MARAC monitored a whole range of high risk domestic abuse, not just specifically related to children, but to adults as well;
- Members asked if the variation in the number of contacts/referrals each month was of significance. Lisa stated that a year on year data comparison of trend would enable better analysis of the data, monthly data could vary for a number of reasons, and sometimes things like a football match could trigger more contacts. Lisa was satisfied that the results were in line with those of other Berkshire authorities;
- Councillor Miall asked how was all this data looked at, so as to not miss anything important. Lisa informed that there was a grading system including the latest psychological scoring grid to assess risk;
- Lisa stated that MASH treated the information confidentially. This was necessary for the protection of the people involved;

- Lisa confirmed that MASH was not a new initiative, so Wokingham had been able to look at how this had been set up in other authorities and learn from it;
- Judith stated that she was satisfied with the progress made so far and that the transition from Felicity Budgen (previous Head of Social Care and Intervention) to Lisa Humphreys had gone well.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

18. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee considered the report containing the Children's Services Performance Indicators. Members were interested to find out the reasons for the 'red' indicators and these were discussed in more detail. The following points were made during the discussion of specific indicators:

% CP visits due in the period which were on-time (within 10 days of the previous visit) - red

- Lisa Humphreys explained that the target of 10 working days was a target set by the Local Authority, the national guidance prescribed a minimum visit every 42 days. Lisa stated that there was a challenge with holidays and people moving house which made it difficult to reach the target;
- In response to a question Lisa explained that there was a combination visits, these being sometimes announced and sometimes unannounced;
- Lisa pointed out that this indicator related to a relatively small number of children (50CP)

% Looked After Children living within 20 miles of Berkshire West - amber

- Lisa informed the Committee that this was improving, however further improvement was required to bring Wokingham in line with national performance;
- Lisa explained that work was being undertaken to increase the recruitment of local foster carers and out of area emergency placements were only used in exceptional circumstances if there were no other options locally. A new Officer had been recruited who was very enthusiastic and optimistic to improve recruitment;
- Lisa stated that since April children had not been placed outside of Wokingham;
- In response to a comment Lisa stated that research indicated that foster carers were usually people who did not have high professional aspirations. Lisa was still to form a picture of Wokingham;
- Lisa stated that some of the challenges in social worker recruitment in Wokingham included: the house prices; the competition with other local authorities and the fact that Wokingham was on the edge of London;
- Judith stated that 70% of the social worker staff was permanent. Judith offered to bring a report to the Committee in November with an update on social worker recruitment;
- In response to a question Judith stated that most social workers had a relatively short career. This was due to various reasons, including not enough recognition for their work in social work. Judith believed Wokingham was doing well in retaining social workers and research said that the morale was high in Wokingham;
- The Chairman asked what was being done to recruit foster cares from BME (Black and Minority Ethnicity) communities. Lisa stated that this was something that needed to be reviewed to encourage more diversity. Councillor Haitham Taylor asked Members to inform Officers of any venues where this message could be spread.

% Secondary Schools with a current Ofsted rating of 'good' or better - red

- The Chairman asked to what extent the Local Authority was responsible for academies' Ofsted results. Alan Stubbersfield stated that the Government had determined that it was up to academies to determine what level of relationship they wished to have with the Local Authority. However the Local Authority was still responsible for the educational outcome for pupils;
- Alan informed that Wokingham Borough Council did not have a close relationship with the Forest Academy, however Alan believed that there were positive signs that the school was heading in the right direction.

19. POST OFSTED ACTION PLAN

Paul Feven, Interim Head of Strategic Commissioning introduced the report and gave a brief overview of its contents. Judith Ramsden explained that the report contained very high level information and did not capture everything that Children's Services was doing in its post Ofsted action plan.

Due to the fact that there was lots of information contained in the report and this had been received after the agenda dispatch, the Committee decided to defer this item to the next meeting.

RESOLVED That the report be deferred to the next meeting.

20. SIX MONTH SELF-ASSESSMENT PLAN

This item was deferred to the next meeting,

21. SUMMARY OF 5 SCHOOLS WITH OFSTED REPORT BEING PUBLISHED BETWEEN JUNE 2016 AND AUGUST 2016

The Committee received a report giving details of the Ofsted reports of the following schools: Coombes CofE Primary; Oaklands Infant; Westend Junior; Oakbank and Winnersh Primary.

Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement offered to answer any questions relating to the reports. The Committee went through the Ofsted reports school by school and some of the points made are listed below.

Coombes Church of England Primary School

- The Chairman confirmed that following the Coombes School Ofsted inspection, a Task and Finish Group had been set up to understand what went wrong and how to prevent it from happening to other schools in the Borough. This was still ongoing, the final report and recommendations would be presented to the Committee when ready. It was expected this would be ready by November 2016;
- Alan stated that an Interim Headteacher had been appointed and an Interim Executive Board had been set up to manage the school. The Board included a member from the Oxford Diocese who had a view to establish a Church of England Academy ;
- Alan stated that the school had started the new academic year well, with a number of new teacher appointments;
- The Local Authority was regularly monitoring the school and Alan would report back on its progress;
- In response to a question, Alan stated that it was possible that by next September the situation could have reverted as there was now a strong leadership in place;
- Alan explained that in his view the school had not handled the inspection well and had lacked confidence;
- Judith pointed out that there were many good leaders in schools around the Borough;

- Members asked Officers how long before the inspection had it been identified that the school was underachieving. Members were concerned they were not being informed of schools' underachievement in sufficient time before this was released to the press. Judith confirmed that such information was kept confidential as there was a process to be followed, sometimes there were issues to do with HR and the police, at times it was in the best interest of public accountability to keep information confidential;
- Councillor Haitham Taylor emphasized that it was important to be very careful with information, there were examples of information going onto Facebook and other social media within hours of it being disclosed;
- Members asked to be sent the Terms of Reference of the Coombes Schools Task and Finish Group. Luciane Bowker, Senior Democratic Officer reminded Members that this was a confidential paper.

Oaklands Infant School

- Alan stated that this had been a one day inspection and the report was very positive;
- Judith reminded Members that bar had risen with the new inspection format, therefore to remain 'good' equated to an excellent result;
- In response to a question Alan stated that all schools in Wokingham had the potential to attain 'outstanding' results.

Westende Junior School

- Alan stated that this was a good report, and declared that credit should be given to the Headteacher Dominic Cook, who had been covering maternity leave at the time of the inspection;
- Alan informed that 'writing' was an area that needed improving in most schools in the Borough, as evidenced by the feedback given in most Ofsted reports;
- In response to a question, Judith confirmed that all schools that achieved good Ofsted results received a letter from the Council praising their achievement.

Oakbank

- The Chairman noted the considerable progress achieved by Oakbank, going from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good' and asked Officers how long it had taken to turn the school around. Alan believed it had taken around 18 months for the school to achieve this result;
- Councillor Haitham Taylor stated that a new Headteacher and a new Deputy Headteacher had made a significant difference and had enabled the necessary changes to achieve this result;
- In response to a comment, Alan confirmed that smaller schools were more volatile. Oakbank was a new school which was growing each year, this growth generated more staff, more pupils and more funding;
- Judith emphasised that it had been the strong leadership and not the growth of the school alone that had enabled the school to achieve its 'Good' Ofsted rating;
- Members were in agreement that strong leadership was crucial to the achievements of any school;
- Councillor Dolinski pointed out that 'Outstanding' ratings would only be achieved with strong leadership.

Winnersh Primary

- Members were pleased to note that the school had gone from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good'.

RESOLVED That the summary of five schools with Ofsted reports published between June 2016 and August 2016 be noted.

22. ESTABLISHING A WOKINGHAM MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

The Committee received a report which was set out in agenda pages 41- 48. Alan Stubbersfield explained that the report had already been submitted to the 28 July 2016 Executive meeting. This initiative had been created as a result of the Government's White Paper published earlier in the year incentivising schools to become academies. Alan stated that this remained a priority for the Government.

Alan informed that to initiate the process to create a Wokingham Multi Academy Trust, a Member/Officer Task and Finish Group was being set up. This Group would undertake the necessary work to establish the best way to set up the Trust.

Members would like to be kept informed of the work carried out by the Task and Finish Group and asked that the report and recommendations resulting from the Group be brought to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee before its submission to Executive.

Councillor Haitham Taylor explained that the Terms of Reference of the Group were in line with the description contained in the report attached to the agenda. Councillor Haitham Taylor asked Members to bear in mind the current financial constraints faced by schools and education services. It was pointed out that the Education Services Grant that the local authority received was going to be significantly reduced according to the Government's proposals.

In response to a question Alan informed that this was a pioneer initiative, no other local authority had yet set up multi academy trusts.

Judith informed that a questionnaire had been sent to schools enquiring about their interest in taking part in the Wokingham Multi Academy Trust. Around 30 schools had expressed interest in joining the Trust, but the numbers were not yet final.

Members felt this was a good initiative and praised the senior leadership involved in this project. Members asked Officers to engage the local MPs to lobby for funding. Judith stated that currently there was no funding to support the transition, she was trying to organise a date to meet with the Educational Commissioner to discuss funding.

In response to a question, Judith explained that it was not known at this point in time if the Trust would have a charitable status or not; this was one of the details that the Task and Finish Group would have to explore. Judith also stated that it was to be debated at the Group what level of traded services the trust was going to offer. It was anticipated that the next two years would be financially challenging.

Members suggested that the Task and Finish Group should be cross party.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the proposals for exploration of the process of establishing a Wokingham Multi Academy Trust;
- 2) The Wokingham Multi Academy Trust Task and Finish Group present its final report to this Committee before its submission to Executive.

23. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL POLICIES REGARDING TRANSEXUAL ISSUES IN SCHOOLS

The Committee received a verbal report from Alan Stubbersfield on Wokingham Borough Council's policies regarding transsexual issues in schools.

Alan stated that this issue involved a small number of cases in Wokingham, only four children were known to be affected by it, including one which related to the parent being a transsexual and the child experiencing anxiety as a result. Alan informed that Wokingham Borough Council did not have a transsexual policy in place. When necessary, psychologist services were used to ensure the wellbeing of the children affected by this issue.

Alan informed that in his research he found two other local authorities who had adopted transsexual policies, one of which was Cornwall. Alan stated that Cornwall's policy was an extensive piece of work which could be used as guidance for Wokingham. Alan suggested that it would be useful to make guidance available on the website so that schools could refer to it. It would be good to raise awareness on this issue.

During the discussion of the item the following points were made:

- Councillor Miall felt this issue was very delicate and should be treated carefully. He believed this could be problematic in schools as parents often did not understand the issue. In his view it was probably worse at secondary school level. He thought it would be useful if there were more guidance and rules. He reported being approached by residents in his ward regarding this issue and that was why he had proposed a discussion around it;
- Judith was of the opinion that different contexts might require different approaches and therefore a set of rules may not resolve the issue. Judith believed that psychologists were able to work effectively with families;
- Councillor Swaddle stated that the verbal update did not cover the item listed in the agenda, she wished to know what was Wokingham Borough Council's policies regarding transsexual issues in schools;
- It was proposed and agreed by the Committee that a report be brought back for discussion in six months' time. (Subsequently during the discussion of the forward programme, it was agreed that this report would be part of an equality report.)
- Members asked to receive a copy of Cornwall Council Policy.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) A report containing information on Wokingham Borough Council's policies regarding transsexual issues in schools be brought back to the Committee;
- 2) Cornwall Council Transsexual Policy will be sent out to Members for information.

24. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report with the future dates of meetings and possible items for consideration. The following items were added:

15 November 2016

- Coombes School Task and Finish Group final report;
- Deferred item 18 – Post Ofsted Action Plan and item 19 – Six Month Self-Assessment Plan;
- Equality support for young people, including:
 - Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual

- Transgender issues;
- Support for disabled children and their families in education and everyday life.

21 March 2017

- MASH update;
- Social Worker recruitment update.

Judith would confirm the dates for the following items:

- Career choice and guidance/ training opportunities for children in the Borough;
- Corporate Parenting Board annual report;
- Wokingham Safeguarding Children's Board annual report.