

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2017 FROM 7.04 PM TO 9.21 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Pauline Helliard-Symons (Chairman), Parry Batt, Ken Miall, Emma Hobbs (as a substitute for Laura Blumenthal) and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey (as a substitute for Beth Rowland)

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Mark Ashwell and Andy Croy

Officers Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Election Services Specialist
Lisa Humphreys, Head of Social Care and Intervention
Caroline McKenna, Interim Quality, Assurance and Safeguarding Manager
Jane Winterbone, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement

27. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Laura Blumenthal, Beth Rowland, Bill Soane and Shahid Younis.

28. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 September 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

30. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

31. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

32. CHILDREN'S SERVICES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee considered the Children's Services Key Performance Indicators report which was set out in agenda pages 15-22.

Caroline McKenna, Interim Quality, Assurance and Safeguarding Manager explained that as requested by the Committee at the previous meeting, the report now informed which targets were national and which targets were local. She stated that the report also contained an explanation around the target setting rationale.

Caroline stated that the indicator in relation to the *percentage of child protection visits due in the period which were completed on time (within 10 days of the previous visit)* was red. She explained that the statutory minimum frequency for visits to children subject to a Child Protection Plan was every 42 days. The 10 day target had been set locally to ensure that ambitious, high quality of work with children at risk of significant harm was planned and delivered.

Caroline explained that whilst the target of 10 days was missed in Q2, 94.4% of visits took place within 15 working days of the previous visit. Service Managers and Assistant Directors were aware of the children who were not seen within 10 working days and the reasons for this, all children had now been seen.

Caroline stated that the Committee had the option to change the target in line with the national target, this would make the indicator green as the national target was being met.

The Committee agreed that it was important to keep the local 10 day target in order to continue with the high aspiration of the service. However, the Committee advised that the indicator could be changed to amber to reflect the fact that it was within the national target.

The Chairman was pleased to note that the indicator in relation to the *percentage of schools with a current Ofsted rating of good or better* had been changed to a target of 100%. This had been requested by the Committee and she believed that it was right for the Council to have the ambition of achieving this target.

The Chairman thanked Officers for including explanations as to how targets had been reached and asked that future reports continue to include this additional information.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

33. POLICY UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Chairman explained that a proposal to introduce an update by the Executive Member for Children's Services as a standing item had emerged from discussions that had taken place at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. The idea was that Executive Members would work with their respective Scrutiny Committees during the development of policies.

Mark Ashwell, Executive Member for Children's Services stated that he welcomed the opportunity to work with the Committee and asked for suggestions and ideas as to what lines of enquire the Committee wished to pursue, and what outcome was expected out of this item.

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

- The Chairman asked Members to email her with any ideas or suggestions of key lines of enquire that they may wish to pursue;
- Councillor Ashwell stated that the work of Children's Services could be divided between Children's Social Care and Early Help and Children's Education;
- Councillor Ashwell suggested that the Committee could look at a proposal to introduce council tax relief for Care Leavers;
- Members were informed that a lot of work in relation to Children In Care (CIC) was carried out by the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB);
- The Chairman stated that in the past councillors had signed a Pledge to Looked After Children at a meeting of the Council with the presence of the mayor. She believed that it would be a good idea to do this again;
- Lisa Humphreys, Head of Social Care and Intervention stated that the CIC received an annual questionnaire which was submitted to CPB for analysis and discussion;
- Councillor Miall felt it would be better to send out the questionnaire twice a year in order to have a more complete picture of the CIC's feedback;

- Councillor Ashwell explained that the Children In Care Council (CICC) attended CPB and gave the Board an update at every meeting, their views were already being considered regularly;
- Lisa offered to include the questionnaire with the CPB annual report to the Committee;
- Councillor Ashwell suggested including Corporate Parenting training in his forward planning;
- Caroline stated that most CIC did not know what the elected Members' work was, therefore they were not always sure what they could ask of Members. She suggested that a group of Members could champion a group of children and take on a more active role as corporate parents;
- Lisa stated that in August there had been an event day for CIC which had been attended by some councillors and there had been great integration;
- Councillor Ashwell stated that most councillors contributed to CIC's Christmas presents every year, he suggested that this fund could be used to fund events during the year;
- The Chairman suggested that Councillor Ashwell, Lisa and Caroline meet outside of this meeting to explore the ideas that arose during the discussion;
- In relation to the proposal to exempt Care Leavers of council tax, Lisa stated that a lot of work was already being undertaken in the background. She informed the Committee that some Care Leavers already received a 25% reduction in their council tax. Lisa stated that the Council incurred costs in relation to debt collection and tenancy management of Care Leavers and young vulnerable people. Should the Council opt to exempt Care Leavers of council tax, this would fulfil the Council's statutory duty in relation to the Social Care Bill and it only affected around 30 people;
- Councillor Shepherd-Dubey suggested increasing the reduction of council tax to 50%;
- Councillor Hobbs explained that the proposal to exempt Foster Carers of council tax had been put forward by CPB in an effort to encourage more people to become Foster Carers;
- The Chairman mentioned a report by the Children's Society which presented a convincing argument in favour of tax relief for Care Leavers. Members asked that this report be circulated to the Committee;
- Members asked that two separate reports be produced in relation to council tax exemption for further discussion at the next meeting: one for Foster Carers and one for Care Leavers; and
- Members were in favour of discussing the proposal of tax exemption for Care Leavers at the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee before this was presented to Executive.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Members would email the Chairman with ideas and suggestions of key lines of enquiry; and
- 2) The Committee would receive and consider two reports at its January meeting in relation to:
 - a) Foster Carers' council tax exemption and
 - b) Care Leavers' council tax exemption

34. JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION PLAN

The Committee considered the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) report which was set out in agenda pages 25-29. The Committee noted that the action plan was not included

with the papers. Caroline apologised that the action plan had not been distributed with the agenda and offered to circulate hard copies at the meeting.

The Committee considered that it would be better to bring the action plan back to the next meeting where a more informed discussion could be had.

In response to a question Caroline stated that the action plan had been submitted to Ofsted on 16 October and confirmed that all agencies had contributed to the production of the action plan.

Caroline informed that Ofsted would not write a response to the action plan, but would consider it at its next inspection.

Caroline stated that the inspection had looked at different agencies in relation to multi agency response to abuse and neglect and the leadership and management arrangements as a partnership.

Caroline informed that JTAI had identified some areas for improvement. For example in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), where further work was needed to ensure a consistent and considered multi-agency approach to joint risk assessment and decision making in cases of neglect. More joint work was required at the early stages of assessment when agencies were first made aware of children at risk of neglect.

The Committee was interested to find out more about the multi-agency work described in the report. Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Elections Specialist offered to invite partner agencies to attend the meeting in January and the Committee agreed that this would be useful.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Joint Targeted Area Inspection Action Plan would be deferred to the January meeting; and
- 2) Partner agencies would be invited to attend the meeting in January.

35. LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) annual report which was set out in agenda pages 31-75. Caroline explained that this was a statutory requirement of the Children Act, and it contained a list of achievements and challenges identified by the LSCB.

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

- The Chairman was impressed with the language used throughout the report, such as *'how we make a difference'*, *'the impact that we made'* and *'what we have achieved'*;
- The Chairman noted an improvement in *'how we hear the child's voice'* in comparison to previous years. Caroline believed that more work was needed to improve this area;
- Lisa emphasised that children were at the centre of the work and it was important to listen to their views. Some improvement had been made in relation to hearing the children, for example the Children In Care Council was now taking an active part in meetings of Corporate Parenting Board. However, the service was looking into ways to improve it further;

- Councillor Bath asked how long it took for the service to change procedures. Caroline replied that there was an enormous amount of new regulations which the service had to adapt to, which involved the workforce and wider partnerships. She stated that it was important to change the procedures and at the same time make sure that children continued to be safeguarded effectively;
- The Chairman was pleased to note the creation of an indicator to monitor child sexual exploitation (page 45 of the agenda). Lisa explained that this was used as a screening tool and the information was passed to Social Workers. Lisa stated that such indicators were useful, but pointed out that it was important to continue to be vigilant;
- Members asked about the service being provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Caroline stated that there were difficulties locally and nationally in relation to waiting lists, underfunding and a shortage of qualified skilled professionals;
- Lisa believed that the picture was improving and that there were different pathways to treatment;
- In response to a question Lisa stated that CAMHS recognised that there were children who needed help who were having to wait too long for treatment. She explained that sometimes people only received treatment when their condition deteriorated;
- Councillor Miall was interested to know how to make sure that everyone who needed mental health services was captured. Caroline stated that it was important to use a variety of resources, such as schools for early identification. She recognised that there were issues such as a raise in demand, more complex needs and less funding;
- Lisa informed that CAMHS and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were offering a lot of mental health help online and through apps. This approach had proved very effective for low level mental health issues with 9-10 year olds;
- Councillor Shepherd-Dubey expressed great concern that schools were under financial stress and not able to provide mental health help to children;
- In response to a question Lisa stated that when Care Leavers needed mental health treatment and this was not available through CAMHS she would fund it privately from her budget;
- In response to a question Jane Winterbone, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement confirmed that Headteachers were aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and bullying;
- Councillor Hobbs suggested that a lot of older retired people were able to and willing to help the community in the form of counselling. Lisa stated that this was already done under the independent visitor scheme which was run with volunteers; and
- Lisa agreed that in the right context it was possible for older people to provide supported lodging in their house, which could offer reciprocal help in terms of companionship.

The Chairman stated that this was one of the best reports submitted by the LSCB and it was pleasing to note that there had been many improvements to the safeguarding of children in the Borough.

Caroline explained that transition arrangements were underway and that the current format of the LSCB was being dismantled, a new format under new regulations was expected in the near future.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

36. CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) annual report which was set out in agenda pages 77-106.

The Committee went through the report and the following comments were made:

- In response to a question Lisa stated that the CIC and CICC had both been consulted about the Pledge and the feedback had been positive, therefore there was no need to change it at this point in time, however this would continue to be reviewed from time to time;
- The Chairman questioned why only 41% of Care Leavers felt cared for by the people that help them (page 87). Lisa stated that this year's questionnaire for CIC did not have space for answers to be expanded, so it was difficult to know the reason behind this answer. She proposed to change the format of the questionnaire for next year; and
- In response to a question Lisa stated that the Task and Finish Group which was mentioned in the report consisted of a combination of CIC, councillors and officers representatives.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The Committee agreed and endorsed the annual Corporate Parenting Board report;
- 2) The recommendations and strategic delivery action plan be noted;
- 3) The new strategic priorities for 2017/18 be agreed;
- 4) The Committee would receive six monthly progress updates on the 2017/18 action plan; and
- 5) It was recommended that all Corporate Parenting Board agenda items and minutes reference which priorities it related to in order to easily identify progress against the priorities.

37. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OFSTED REPORTS

The Committee considered the School Performance Indicators and Ofsted reports which were set out in agenda pages 109-115 and the supplementary paper to the item.

Jane Winterbone stated that since the production of the report three Ofsted reports had been released:

Willow House – Berkshire Adolescent Unit – retained Outstanding

Jane informed that this provision now received Tier 4 pupils. The report contained very positive comments such as: *the school is nurturing and challenging*.

Addington – retained Outstanding

Jane informed that there was a new Headteacher who had only been at the school for two terms, but she had already made positive changes to the school. The leadership was strong and the governing body knew the school really well and worked very hard.

Gorse Ride – short monitoring visit

Jane informed that the school was taking effective action since the last inspection. The school was working to improve outcomes in relation to Pupil Premium children.

Jane stated these latest results had increased the percentage of outstanding schools in the Borough. The Chairman confirmed that it was the Council's ambition to have 100% outstanding schools in the Borough.

The Committee was pleased to receive the full list of current Ofsted ratings for all schools in the Borough and asked that this continues to be provided at every meeting. The Committee was glad to point out that most schools were marked 'green' and thanked Officers for their work to achieve this.

The Committee considered the 2017 provisional school results and the following comments were made:

- Jane explained that the results were provisional until KS4 final results were released in January. The Chairman asked that the final results be submitted to the Committee in January;
- Jane explained that she had not been able to include the results for Yateley and Edgbarrow schools as they were outside of the Borough, she would only be able to include these results when they were published nationally;
- The Committee asked that the next report include a list of all exam results, including a breakdown of individual secondary schools by percentage results for comparison purposes;
- Jane explained that the current measurement used by the government was '*progress 8*' and '*attainment 8*' scores. This was also the first year under the new grading of 1-9. At the moment it was not certain if the reporting would relate to 4-9 or 5-9;
- Members noted with concern that the AAB attainment in Wokingham was lower than the national average. Jane stated that the cause for this not yet known, once the final results were received it would be possible to analyse it and find out the reasons. Jane informed that this was an issue affecting all schools; and
- In response to a question Jane stated that good progress had been made in relation to closing the gap.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The report be noted; and
- 2) A school performance report including the exam results for 2017, with a breakdown of all the schools in the Borough will be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee in January.

38. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Forward Programme which was set out in agenda pages 117-120 was considered and the following items were added:

23 January 2018

- Schools Performance - A breakdown of 2017 exam results of all secondary schools by percentage in the Borough
- Joint Targeted Area Inspection Action Plan

20 March 2018

- Corporate Parenting Board six monthly update, including the Children In Care questionnaire

39. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of the Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as appropriate.

40. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

This item was considered and discussed in a Part 2 session.

RESOLVED That the contents of the report be noted.