

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2018 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.10 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Prue Bray, Jenny Cheng, Graham Howe and Ken Miall

**Other Councillors Present**

Councillors: Pauline Helliard-Symons

**Officers Present**

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist

Piers Brunning, Senior Specialist (People and Place)

Carol Cammiss, Assistant Director Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Standards

Gillian Cole, Principal Primary Advisor

Elaine Munro, Principal Educational Psychologist

Estelle Kelleway, Acting Assistant Director for Early Help and Children's Social Care

Jim Leivers, Interim Director of Children's Services

Emma Slaughter, Early Years Consultant

Viki Elliott-King, Service Manager, Intelligence & Impact, People Services

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Ken Miall was elected Chairman of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2018/19 municipal year.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Kate Haines was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2018/19 municipal year.

**3. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Parry Bath, Kate Haines and Emma Hobbs.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 May 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**MATTERS ARISING**

The Chairman asked that an update report on Care Leavers council tax relief be brought for consideration at the January meeting.

**5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Bray declared an interest on the basis that she was a governor at the Forest School.

Councillor Howe declared an interest on the basis that he was a governor at the Piggott School.

**6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

## **7. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

### **7.1 Gary Cowan asked the Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee the following question**

#### **Question**

The report covers the need for expansion to primary schools within the Borough. Arborfield amongst many others are being considered for expansion.

This proposed expansion to many schools appears to be evolving yet no contact has been made with the relevant ward members even as a courtesy.

Is this an appropriate way for Children's Services to treat Members?

#### **Answer**

The council has no plans to expand primary schools on their current sites in Arborfield. Currently only three primary schools are being expanded, one in Earley, and two in Woodley. These expansion projects have been ongoing for some years and the teams responsible would be pleased to answer any questions local members may have.

Two new primary schools are planned in Arborfield. These have been very long standing projects, written into the master plan for the development for most of the last decade. The council keeps all local stakeholders (including local members) informed and involved in the development of the Arborfield SDL through the neighbourhood forum. The first primary school received planning consent, after a public consultation process that included local members, on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018. On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018 the Council adopted the Wokingham Borough Council Primary School Places Strategy 2018 to 2028, which included the information that the Council intended to open the first Arborfield primary school in 2020. Since that point officers have proceeded with activity to secure a contractor to deliver the scheme, but would not ordinarily share progress on routine project development work such as this with local members. Key project development decisions have therefore been taken through a public process, as projects have progressed.

## **8. PREPARING FOR OUR INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY'S CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Jim Leivers, Interim Director of Children's Services delivered a presentation and explained that an Ofsted inspection into Children's Services was expected by the end of the year.

Some of the main points raised by Jim Leivers were that:

- Wokingham Children's Services had received a 'requires improvement' Ofsted rating at its last inspection in 2015;
- The service was required to produce a self-evaluation;
- Paul Senior, former Director of People Services had had a conversation with Ofsted and the service was aware of the questions that had been raised;
- Ofsted would consider the previous inspections results and performance indicators;
- The service had undergone a specialist inspection in relation to neglect in 2017. Ofsted would be looking to see if the points raised had been addressed;
- Ofsted would be looking that the service's own self-evaluation and improvement plans, in conjunction with the Scrutiny Committee;
- It was important to be frank and honest with the inspectors;

- In the first week Ofsted would be looking at data, information and evidence, in the second week Ofsted would be speaking to leaders;
- There could be as many as nine inspectors, and they would be testing the information given by talking to Social Workers;
- The inspectors would be looking into 8-12 cases in detail and the Social Workers would be expected to demonstrate a high level of knowledge of their cases, or to have a comprehensive file system;
- The inspectors would be considering the children's experience and progress;
- There were 26 agency Social Workers currently working for Wokingham, there was concern with the recruitment and retention of Social Workers;
- The number of Child Protection orders had trebled and the population had gone up by a third, the increase in demand was a challenge for the service;
- Estelle Kelleway, Acting Assistant Director for Early Help and Children's Social Care had undertaken work with the Department of Education (DfE);
- The Annual Review of Corporate Parenting Board was positive;
- Ofsted would not be looking into Children In Care's education records;
- It was important to demonstrate how information was being used to improve practices;
- It was recognised that the integrated service pathway, the transition service for young people into adult services needed improving;
- Ofsted would also be looking at the quality of Social Workers, their training and development, supervision and support;
- The Social Workers workloads would be considered, ideally this should be between 15-20 cases per Social Worker. In Wokingham this was in the region of 20, which could leave the service vulnerable;
- It was important to be able to explain shortcomings and demonstrate a plan for improvement.

The Chairman asked what were the real weak spots which had been identified. Jim Leviers stated the main weak points were:

- The churn of staff at the top of the organisation. However, it was positive that a permanent director had now been appointed and that the recruitment process for permanent assistant directors had started;
- The size of caseloads - this was too high;
- The Local Authority was vulnerable at the front door;
- A lack of integration in relation to transition into adult services.

The Chairman asked if the Local Authority should have been more prepared for the increase in demand and Jim Leviers responded that this was a national issue.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

## **9. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Viki Elliott-King, Service Manager, Intelligence & Impact, People Services stated that the indicators contained in report were an extract of the corporate indicators. She informed that the indicators were looked at quarterly, some ratings were based on national targets and some were based on targets that the Local Authority had set itself.

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

- In relation to indicator 7 on page 16 of the agenda, Viki Elliott-King stated that it was important to avoid a situation where a child came back to a position where she/he was unsafe again;
- Carol Cammiss, Assistant Director Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Standards stated that it was possible that a child may have been assessed as a baby and the second assessment may have been as a 10 year old for example;
- In response to a question Viki Elliott-King informed that the indicators were regularly submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee;
- The Chairman asked that the direction of travel arrows be made clearer to indicate if the direction of travel was good or not;
- Viki Elliott-King welcomed the feedback and she would be passing on this information to the producers of the graphs;
- The Chairman asked to receive a further report at the November meeting.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

## **10. EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE UPDATE**

The Committee received the Educational Psychology Service report which had been produced by Elaine Munro, Principal Educational Psychologist.

Elaine Munro stated that this was a small service which supported Wokingham Borough Council in meeting its statutory duties in relation to the identification, assessment and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The service also supported schools in the Borough. She informed that there had been an increase in demand for the service, with SEND now covering 0-25 year olds.

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

- Councillor Bray asked for more information in relation to the provision of mental health services;
- Elaine Munro stated that the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) intended to make a bid to become a Trailblazer for the Mental Health Teams proposed in the green paper, the outcome would be known in October. The proposal included setting up mental health teams in schools, with a psychologist lead in each team to cover low to medium level mental health issues;
- In response to a question Elaine Munro stated that the figure of £326,000 on page 35 included the total workforce;
- Councillor Bray stated that only 15 schools had replied to the survey to gain feedback, she asked if all schools had been consulted. Elaine Munro stated that all schools had been consulted.

Members of the Committee thanked Elaine Munro for her report and hoped that the bid would be successful.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

## **11. CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT**

Jim Leviers stated that the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Annual report had already been submitted to CPB, he drew attention to the priorities on page 78 of the agenda pack. He stated that CPB members were committed and that Wokingham's CPB worked well.

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

- The Chairman stated that this was a good report and asked how could communication between Children In Care and Members be improved;
- Councillor Helliari-Symons, Executive Member for Children's Services stated that she had attended the annual barbecue and outdoor activity, and that only one councillor had attended the events. She stated that the children had asked about members' non-attendance to the events;
- Councillor Helliari-Symons stated that the Children In Care Council would be attending the Council meeting in November to sign the Children In Care and Care Leavers Pledge;
- The Chairman was concerned with the number of children missing from care listed on page 61 of the agenda. Estelle Kelleway stated that there was close monitoring of children missing from care, the longest a child went missing from care in Wokingham was for one week two years ago. There had also been a case of two children that went missing for two months with their father.

The Committee was satisfied that the report showed improvements in the delivery the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) The Committee agrees and endorses the Corporate Parenting Board Annual report;
- 2) The Committee notes the recommendations and strategic delivery action plan;
- 3) The Committee agrees the new strategic priorities for 2018/19;
- 4) The Committee requests six monthly updates on the progress of the 2018/19 action plan; and
- 5) The Committee endorses the recommendation that all Corporate Parenting Boards agenda items and minutes reference which priority it relates to in order to easily identify minuted progress against the priorities.

**12. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY**

Emma Slaughter, Early Years consultant presented the Childcare Sufficiency Strategy report which was set out in agenda pages 87-118.

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

- In response to a question Emma Slaughter stated that the Local Authority had been successful in a bid to the Department of Education (DofE), and the money had been used very carefully;
- Members were interested to know how information regarding funding was being spread to parents. Emma Slaughter stated that this was done at local level, with leaflets and information being available in children's centres, she informed that the take up was high;
- Councillor Helliari-Symons stated that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested a review of childcare sufficiency in the Borough because many people had been worried that there would not be sufficient Early Years places in the Borough. It was pleasing to note that there had been good progress and that Early Years providers in the Borough were being able to meet the local demand;

- Emma Slaughter confirmed that the Local Authority was working closely with providers;
- The Chairman stated that some pre-schools attached to primary schools had closed. Emma Slaughter stated that the settings that had closed were the ones that the Local Authority had concerns about.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

### **13. PRIMARY PLACE STRATEGY**

Piers Brunning, Senior Specialist (People and Place) presented the Primary Place Strategy report which was set out in agenda pages 119-160.

Piers Brunning stated that the Primary School Places Strategy 2018 was adopted by the Council's Executive on 28 June 2018. He explained that the Council had a duty to ensure there were sufficient school places and a detailed infrastructure plan which sat alongside the planning strategy.

Piers went through the report, below are some of the points he highlighted:

- The planned new secondary school, Bohunt, was now open, there was ongoing work to deliver the planned new primary schools;
- The Shinfield West primary school was ready for use in 2016, but was not required that year. Although 30 children had to be diverted to schools out of the area on offer day, parents found alternative places for their children in established schools in surrounding communities before the start of the new school year in that September. This school was expected to open in September 2019, it was being temporarily used for Council offices;
- Two more primary schools were planned: Matthews Green Primary and Arborfield Primary, both were on target to open in 2020;
- Due to the extensive number of new houses being built in the Borough, there were many new families moving in who would need school places;
- The strategy considered the school placement needs in the next three, five and ten years;
- It had been identified that there was pressure points in the Wokingham Town West, South West and Woodley;
- The strategy was likely to change in the future and would continue to be reviewed;
- Woodley required additional provision, initially at least as bulge accommodation for September 2020, leading into permanent accommodation if the raise in population is sustained. This pointed to a need for a local working party of key stakeholders to agree how to address this issue.

Councillor Bray stated that what had been done in Winnersh had worked well, there had been collaborative work which had involved the Parish Council, parents and other stakeholders.

Councillor Helliard-Symons suggested publicising the new school in Shinfield through the Parish Council.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) The Committee requested an update report at the end of this municipal year;

2) The update report will include the application number analysis.

#### **14. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND INDICATORS AND OFSTED REPORTS**

The Committee noted the outcomes of Ofsted inspections which had taken place since the last meeting of the Committee. The results were as follows:

- Beechwood Primary – Inadequate
- Emmbrook Junior – Requires Improvement
- Forest Secondary – Requires Improvement
- Hillside Primary – Good
- Radstock Primary – Requires Improvement
- Robert Piggott Infant – Good
- Robert Piggott Junior – Good

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

#### **15. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee noted that many items had been deferred to the next meeting in November, and that there were probably too many items for one meeting. The Chairman stated that he would arrange a meeting with the new Director of Children's Services to discuss the forward plan.

#### **16. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

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.

#### **17. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN - PART 2**

The report was discussed in a Part 2 session.