

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 25 MARCH 2019 FROM 7.00 AM TO 8.30 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Ken Miall (Chairman), Prue Bray, Jenny Cheng, Philip Houldsworth and Graham Howe

**Other Councillors Present**

Councillors: Pauline Helliard-Symonds

**Officers Present**

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist  
Carol Cammiss, Director of Children's Services  
Gillian Cole, Principal Primary Advisor  
Sal Thirlway, Service Manager, Disabled Children and Early Help

**Others Present**

Tom Gregory, Team Leader, Regional Schools Commissioner  
Catherine Turton-Ryz, Team Leader, Regional Schools Commissioner

**45. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Emma Hobbs and Dame Kate Dethridge.

**46. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 January 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**47. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**48. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

**49. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

**50. REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER**

The Chairman welcomed Catherine Turton-Ryz and Tom Gregory who were representing the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to answer questions in relation to academy schools in the Borough.

Tom Gregory stated that Martin Post was the RSC for the North West London and South-Central England regions. Catherine Turton-Ryz and Tom Gregory were Team Leaders for the South Region, of which Wokingham was part of.

Tom Gregory stated that the RSC's work involved overseeing the performance of academy schools and promoting better outcomes for children. The RSC worked closely with the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

The Committee was invited to ask questions and during discussions the following comments were made:

- Councillor Howe asked about the structure and powers of the RSC. Tom Gregory stated that there were eight RSC's across England and they were divided in regions. Each region may be structured slightly differently from one another, the South Region was structured with team leaders who were appointed to different areas within the regions. RSC's looked into the academisation process of schools, facilitated changes and monitored the performance of academies. The RSC's powers in relation to maintained schools were limited to when a maintained school was rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted. The RSC in this instance would intervene and direct the school into the academisation process. The RSC worked alongside the EFA, which was the regulatory body;
- In response to a question Tom Gregory stated that the RSC did not dictate the number of pupils for academy schools, but they would look at the financial forecast and potentially suggest different models if they believed that the proposed number was not sustainable;
- In response to a question Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that currently they were working with three to ten academy applications from schools in Wokingham to join academy trusts, they were working with headteachers and trust boards to facilitate this process;
- Councillor Bray asked about the RSC's involvement with the Northern House School. Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that she had met twice with the school to talk about their improvement plan and how they were going to get out of special measures. She was due to have another meeting with the school this week. They were working to support the school and the headteacher to achieve the necessary improvements;
- Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that ultimately, if things did not improve at the Northern House, the RSC would look to transfer the school to another academy trust;
- Councillor Bray pointed out that changing the provider was not necessarily the answer to the problems;
- Tom Gregory stated that it was the trust board that was accountable to the RSC and not schools or headteachers directly;
- In response to a question Catherine Turton-Ryz reiterated that the RSC tended to challenge the trust board in terms of what was being done to improve the school, and not the schools directly. The RSC had the power to go into schools, and they used to send an Education Advisor to schools, but this now happened on a smaller scale. The RSC used Ofsted reports, outcome results and also intelligence from the local authority to monitor the academies' performance;
- Councillor Hellior-Symonds, Executive Member for Children's Services asked if the RSC was aware that some academies were dissuading Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) children from their schools. Tom Gregory stated that any information regarding this be passed to the RSC for further investigation;
- Councillor Helliar-Symonds asked why Wokingham had had its request for a new specialist school turned down. The RSC's representatives were not able to answer this question as this was not within the scope of their team's work;
- Councillors questioned the rise in exclusions in the Borough, in particular at Oakbank. Tom Gregory stated that this issue was raised in conversations with trust boards. He believed that sometimes this was the result of a school trying to resolve behaviour issues quickly;
- In response to a question Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that the RSC met termly with the Northern House headteacher;

- In response to a question Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that the RSC worked closely with the local authority;
- Councillor Bray asked for clarification around the funding agreement and the change in the admissions number for Bohunt School from 180 to 240. Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that Bohunt was operating within its funding agreement. The funding agreement was what was agreed between the Secretary of State and the academy trust, this was signed on 29 February 2016 and stated that the planned capacity for the school was 1200 for 11-16, therefore a Planned Admission Number (PAN) of 240. What she believed happened was that when the school moved to its temporary site in 2016 before moving into its permanent site they admitted 180 for Year 7, and when they moved to the permanent site they admitted 240, as planned on their funding agreement. Going forward, in order for the school to increase from 11-16 to 11-18 the school would have to submit a 'significant change' application, and the RSC would carefully consider this, taking into account the demand for places in the area, the impact on other schools, the subject offer and consultation responses;
- In response to a question Tom Gregory stated that the RSC relied on the local authority's predictions around demand for places. House building for example, was not necessarily an accurate indicator of rise in demand;
- Councillor Howe was interested to know how the RSC made the decision to enforce a change of trust in an underperforming school. Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that they would look for a trust that had the capacity to take on that particular school. If a trust did not want to take on a school, they would look for another trust;
- In response to a question Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that they tried to find a local trust, within no more than 30 minutes' drive from the school if possible;
- Councillor Howe stated that there was a strong sense of community in this area and that it was important that the selected trusts were local;
- Councillor Miall asked what was expected of local authorities in relation to academy schools. Tom Gregory stated that the local authority had a duty in relation to children's safeguarding, and the local authority was also expected to maintain a good working relationship with the RSC;
- In response to a question Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that in the event of a school underperforming the RSC would contact the trust and the local authority because some academies still received support from the local authority;
- Tom Gregory stated that if a school was not supported by the local authority, the RSC would contact whoever provided external support to the school. Ultimately the RSC would speak to the board of trustee's as they were the direct employer and performance managers of the headteacher;
- In response to a question Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that there was no longer an expectation that all schools would become academies;
- Tom Gregory stated that since 2010 many schools had converted to academies, currently approximately 50.8% of all pupils were attending academy schools;
- Councillors asked if there was any concerns over academy schools in Wokingham in general. Catherine Turton-Ryz stated that most schools in Wokingham were good or outstanding, and if compared to other areas there were no major concerns.

The Chairman thanked Tom Gregory and Catherine Turton-Ryz for their attendance at this meeting and they agreed to receive any further questions the Members might have via email.

**RESOLVED** That: The discussion with the Regional Schools Commissioner's representatives be noted and that any further questions will be asked and responded via email.

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

Gillian Cole, Principal Primary Advisor presented the School Performance Indicators and Ofsted Reports report which was set out in agenda pages 15-22. She stated that the report contained summaries of the most recent Ofsted inspections since the last meeting of the Committee.

Gillian Cole explained the inspection process. Most schools that had a 'Good' rating would receive a 'section A' inspection, this consisted of a one day monitoring visit to check that the school was still 'Good', the section A inspection did not have the power to change the rating of the school. The section A inspection could trigger a 'section 5' inspection which was a two day inspection. A section 5 inspection was recommended when it was believed that a 'Good' school could achieve 'Outstanding' or if it was believed that the school would not sustain a 'Good' rating if subjected to a two-day inspection. This Ofsted inspection format had changed 18 months ago.

Councillor Bray stated that the parents of Bearwood Primary had been informed of the school's recent Ofsted inspection result, even though this information was not yet publicly available. Gillian Cole stated that schools had to follow a process which involved informing the parents of the result before this was made public. However, she was unable to comment as the result had not yet been published on the website, this would be available for the next meeting.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

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

Sarah Sesay, Performance Manager, Social Care presented the Children's Services Performance Indicators report which was set out in agenda pages 23-33.

Sarah Sesay stated that this was the corporate quarterly report. Concerns had been raised at the last meeting in relation to the fact that the data presented to the Committee was three to four months out of date. The service was currently working on a different template which would enable the production of more timely information.

Sarah Sesay talked in more detail about the some indicators as listed below.

### **Indicators relating to the percentage of Wokingham Borough state-funded Schools with current Ofsted rating of Good or better.**

Sarah Sesay stated that this indicator had improved for primary schools, with Keep Hatch Primary School moving from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'.

There had been no changes to any of the secondary schools' ratings. Therefore this indicator continued to be amber as not all secondary schools had a rating of 'Good' or better.

The Northern House continued with its rating of 'inadequate', the special schools indicator continued to be red.

### **EA3: Percentage of Early Years settings in Wokingham Borough with an Ofsted rating of Good or better**

Two independent providers were rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted. These independent providers initially refused support from WBC, but were now agreeing to work with WBC staff on improvements.

**Percentage of children who entered care in the period and were placed more than 20 miles from their home (excluding unaccompanied asylum seeking children, children placed with parents and children in receipt of short breaks support)**

This indicator was improving, and it was important to note that the numbers were very small.

**Percentage of all children all children in care at the end of the period who were moved more than 20 miles from their home (excluding unaccompanied asylum seeking children, children placed with parents and children in receipt of short breaks support)**

This indicator was improving.

**EA11: 12-Month rolling voluntary turnover of qualified Social Workers within Children's Social Care and Early Intervention Service**

The service was aware of the importance of a stable social work workforce and was taking action to address this. A workforce development strategy was being further developed to focus on the retention of the best staff, this was in parallel with an active recruitment drive.

**Percentage of referrals in 2018/19 which are repeat referrals within 12 months of the previous referral to Children's Social Care**

There was a positive improvement of this indicator and the target was met.

**Percentage of children who become subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time within 24 months**

There was a positive improvement of this indicator and the target was met.

**Percentage of children who became subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time ever**

This indicator was more difficult to achieve as a child may have been subject to a Child Protection Plan as a baby and then again at the age of 17, for example. However this indicator was improving and the target was being met.

**VP7: Percentage of children leaving care who achieved permanence (adopted, returned home or special guardianship order is granted)**

The definition of achieving permanence in this indicator was questionable, for example: an arrangement where a child who turned 18 stayed with his/her foster parents was not considered a permanent placement, however this was a positive arrangement.

This indicator deteriorated from the previous quarter.

The percentage of children leaving care due to being adopted, returning home, or becoming subject to a special guardianship order reduced in quarter 3. Seven children left care in this period because they turned 18 and are therefore not counted in this indicator as achieving permanence. Of those seven young people, one resides with family members, two remain with their former foster carers under a staying put arrangement, three remain in the same supported accommodation placement where they resided before they left care, and one is living in accommodation to support their high needs.

**VP8: Percentage of child protection visits due in the period which were completed on time (within 10 days of the previous visit).**

There was a slight improvement in performance in Q3 2018-19 and the indication is that there will be subsequent incremental improvements for this indicator as teams have had a particular focus on improving this area of work.

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

- In response to a question Sarah Sesay stated that in relation to achieving permanence, some children could be adopted and some may have returned home;
- In response to a question Sarah Sesay stated that the service often discussed how to best provide the information in relation to permanence. There was an ongoing debate to decide if over 18 year olds should be excluded from this figure.

Sarah Sesay stated that it was hoped that the data would be presented in a different format for the next meeting, making it more up to date and relevant.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

**53. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee noted the forward plan and future dates of meetings.

The 'Service Plan' item was renamed 'Continuous Improvement Plan' and it was moved to the 17 September meeting.

Carol Cammiss confirmed that the service was currently developing a new format for the key performance indicators report, aiming to bring more up to date information to the Committee. There would be new information for the June meeting even if the new template was not ready.

In response to a question Carol Cammiss stated that she was unable to disclose the result of the SEND Ofsted inspection as this was not yet in the public domain. She stated that there had been no surprises and that Ofsted recognised that the new leadership structure was moving the service in the right direction.

The Committee asked for a review of the SEND Ofsted to be brought to the next meeting on 18 June.

**54. 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.

**55. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN - PART 2**

The report was discussed in a part 2 session.