

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 20 JUNE 2023 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.15 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Andrew Mickleburgh (Chair), Ian Pittock (Vice-Chair), Jane Ainslie, Anne Chadwick, Phil Cunnington, Michael Firmager (substituting Graham Howe) and Andrew Gray

Other Members

Sarah Clarke, SEND Voices Wokingham (online)
Fr Richard Lamey, Church of England representative

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Tony Skuse, Caroline Glover and Marie-Louise Weighill

Officers Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Piers Brunning, School Place Planning Manager
Gillian Cole, Service Manager Schools
Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help
Viki Elliot-King, Assistant Director Strategic and Operational Delivery
Zoe Storey, School Admissions and Transport Manager
Helen Watson, Director of Children's Services
Jonathan Wilding, SEND and Safety Valve Consultant
Ming Zhang, Assistant Director for Education and SEND

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Andrew Mickleburgh was elected Chairman for the 2023/24 municipal year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor Ian Pittock was appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2023/24 municipal year.

3. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Graham Howe. He was substituted by Councillor Michael Firmager.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were submitted from:

Councillor Andrew Gray on the basis that he worked at the Holt School.

Councillor Phil Cunnington on the basis that he was a Member of the Management Committee at the Foundry College.

Reverend Richard Lamey on the basis that he was a Governor for St Pauls Junior and St Cecilia's C of E Primary.

The above mentioned councillors took part in discussions and voted on recommendations.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 March 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising

The request for information about training for drivers and escorts (in relation to home to school transport) would be discussed later in the agenda.

Youth Council presentation to full Council – this had been scheduled for later in the year.

The Education Update report had been circulated to all Members.

A report giving details of Social Worker recruitment and retention would be brought to the September meeting.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

7. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

8. SEND YOUTH FORUM

The Committee received Wokingham SEND Youth Forum for a verbal presentation. They were represented by six young people (some online and some in person) and were accompanied by Ramona Bridgman, Youth Participation Coordinator for Me2 Club and a couple of parents.

One young person who had been unable to attend the meeting had asked that Members be made aware that the equipment in playparks in Wokingham, and in Woodley in particular, were not accessible to wheelchair users. She had a twin sister who could use the equipment and she found it hard to just watch her.

Members were surprised with this information and agreed to investigate it further.

One young person stated that it was very important to have a choice in education and to be able to find the right place to meet one's needs. He would like to go to Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA).

A point was made that the closest school was not necessarily the school of choice or the right school for some young people; individual needs should be taken into account. It was also important for young people to know where they were going to go, uncertainty created anxiety.

One young person wanted to make Members aware of the lack of mental health support, nationally and in the borough. She had had a bad experience with lack of support and wrong advice at a school she had attended four years ago. She had subsequently moved to another school where she had received appropriate support. However, she pointed out that waiting lists for assessments and support meant that young people had to wait too long to receive the support they needed.

Members were of the opinion that good SEND support should be available in every school in the borough. It was necessary to have more mental health training for school staff and more inclusion areas.

Ramona Bridgman added that sometimes small adjustments could be really helpful, for example the use of fidget toys to help concentration.

One young person asked about the provision of housing for young people when living college. His mother explained that he was 21 years old and working towards independence. She had concerns about the support available for transition into adulthood. She believed that the Council should provide semi-independent houses for young people with additional needs, in a similar way to the semi-independent living arrangements currently provided for Care Leavers.

It was pointed out that supporting young people to stay in mainstream education and within their community decreased the cost of their education to the Council. It was essential to have good Early Years intervention.

One young person suggested that more funding for sports participation would be a good way to promote good mental health.

One young person stated that there was a lack of understanding by teachers in relation to young people's needs in the classroom; such as the use of fidget toys and the need to move around.

A parent stated that there was insufficient provision of speech therapy, and staff at schools were not qualified to undertake speech therapy. Also, she stated that her daughter would be able to speak better now if she had been provided with more Early Years intervention.

Councillor Bray informed that one of WBC's councillors used a fidget toy to help with concentration, so she understood the message being delivered.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the SEND Youth Forum and all of those people supporting them for their attendance and contribution to the meeting. It had provided much information for Members to consider.

The Chairman proposed that the SEND Youth Council be invited to attend the CSO&S every year for a review of the services being provided to them. The SEND Youth Council agreed with this proposal.

A parent urged Members to be very careful and spend the SEND Budget wisely.

Helen Watson, Director for Children's Services stated that the comments made during the meeting were very important and would be taken into account by the decision makers at the Council. The SEND Strategy and Budget were currently being reviewed, and the ambition was to improve and get it right. She asked the SEND Youth Council to work with the Council.

RESOLVED That:

1) The verbal update be noted; and

- 2) The SEND Youth Council be invited to attend CSO&S annually to review the services being provided to them.

9. DRAFT UASC STRATEGY

Viki Elliott-King presented the Draft Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Strategy report.

The following points were highlighted:

- UASC were children who were outside of their country of origin without the care and protection of their parents or legal guardian;
- There were many reasons for children to have escaped their country of origin, such as war, fear of persecution, parents being killed, poverty, and others;
- The document was currently a draft as the details were still being agreed;
- The strategy would be a dynamic document as the situation in relation to UASC could change;
- UASC were Children In Care (CIC) and the CIC Strategy applied to them too. However, due to their specific circumstances, it was believed that a separate strategy to address their specific needs;
- There had been an increase in the number of UASC in the borough;
- The strategy included:
 - Enhanced advocacy offer
 - Enhanced training package for social workers
 - Legal advice
 - Age assessment
 - Translation support
 - Emotional health and wellbeing, including mental health first aid training for social workers
 - Specific support for education through the Virtual School;
- There were plans to recruit more foster carers within the borough who could meet their cultural identity needs;
- It was desirable to place UASC in the borough so that they could benefit from the education and training facilities available;
- The UASC Steering Group would meet this week to agree the final strategy;
- The development of supported lodging and semi-independent accommodation would continue to be an area of focus.

Councillor Firmager believed that it was important to offer UCAS the opportunity to take part in sport and drama activities, as this would help them integrate with the community.

Viki Elliott-King agreed that enrichment activities were important for socialising and learning new schools. Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Intervention stated that there were opportunities available for UASC organised by the Virtual School and Here4U.

In respect to the projected increase in the number of UASC, Councillor Gray asked if there was capacity within the borough to accommodate these children in the next few years.

Adam Davis explained that Care Leavers often lived in semi-independent accommodation. For UASC, there was a complication in relation to their legal status; if this was not resolved, they could not work or claim benefits to support them to live independently. Therefore, a range of types of accommodation was needed.

Councillor Ainslie asked how many hours of English tuition as week was provided to UASC? Adam Davis explained that this was organised by the Virtual School. Helen Watson invited Members to attend a meeting of the Virtual School Governing Body so they could ask more specific questions.

Councillor Pittock asked for more information about the process of the allocation of UASC in the country.

Adam Davis explained that the country was divided into regions, and each region had a number of local authorities, there were 19 local authorities in the South East. A lot of children arrived in the costal areas where there were ports, others arrived in service stations. The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) distributed the children across the regions, in accordance with an agreed cap number, in a rota basis. For Wokingham the cap number was currently 41.

Wokingham was probably not the place of choice when children left their home country. They were likely to aim to go where there was a family or community connection.

Councillor Bray explained that not all the UASC that Wokingham was responsible for ever lived in Wokingham. They could be placed in fostering arrangements in other areas, but Wokingham was still responsible for them.

Councillor Pittock observed that it was more difficult to undertake the corporate parenting responsibilities with children living out of the borough. Adam Davis stated that there were plans in the strategy to recruit more foster carers locally. Wherever the children were placed, social workers still had to visit as frequently as they would if they lived in the borough, and they had access to the Virtual School.

Richard Lamey asked for more explanation about the Virtual School. Ming Zang, Assistant Director for Education and SEND explained that the Virtual School was run like a school, but virtually. It had a governing body which was chaired by the Director for Children's Services. The Virtual School worked with schools to ensure that CIC's education was prioritised, they held schools to account and provided support and challenge to schools. Each child had a Personal Educational Plan (PEP), the Virtual School ensure that this plan was of high quality and that the Pupil Premium fund was being used effectively. The role of the Virtual School was a statutory function.

The Chairman suggested that the latest Virtual School report be sent to Members for their information.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The CSO&S Committee notes the content of the draft UASC Strategy and how it complements the overarching Children In Care and Care Leaver Strategy;
- 2) Notes plans for its finalisation and implementation;
- 3) Consideration be given of a peer review of the UCAS Strategy in the next 12 months and its findings to be presented to the CSO&S Committee;

- 4) That the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State and all MPs representing the borough asking for central government grants to be raised to cover the full cost of UASC Care Leavers; and
- 5) Meeting invitations will be arranged for members of CSO&S Committee to attend a Virtual School governing body meeting.

10. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The Chairman announced that Andrew Moulton, WBC's Monitoring Officer had advised that this item ought not to be discussed as it could compromise the integrity of the consultation which was currently being undertaken.

Ming Zhang confirmed that the item should not be discussed at this meeting and suggested that an extraordinary meeting be scheduled in August to debate the matter. *(Subsequently an extraordinary meeting was set up for 15 August 2023.)*

Sarah Clarke, SEND Voices Wokingham asked a question about the survey of the previous year's Home to School Transport Policy. She wanted to know if the feedback received had been taken into account in the writing of the new policy.

Ming Zhang assured the Committee that the feedback received had been taken into account, as well as risk factors.

The Chairman stated that although it was not ideal to defer this item, the reason for deferral was accepted. He asked for information about the process that had been followed thus far, and what it would be going forward.

Ming Zhang explained that a Project Group had been set up, which had been running for approximately two months. This group was composed of experienced officers who were reviewing the current policy and looking at examples of good practice across the country. The aim was to ensure that those children who needed the most support with transport received it.

The group gained agreement to go out to public consultation, and this was currently taking place. The next step would be to submit the proposed policy to the CSO&S Committee in August before it went to the Executive for formal approval. This timeline would mean that the policy could be implemented for September 2024.

Councillor Firmager asked that a written report be submitted in good time, ahead of the extraordinary meeting, to allow sufficient time for its consideration.

Councillor Bray offered to include information about the training for drivers and escorts in the report for the extraordinary meeting.

Ming Zhang informed that training was scheduled for September 2023.

Councillor Cunnington asked why there was urgency in this matter. Councillor Bray explained that in order for the policy to be implementable in September 2024, it had to be approved by 15 September 2023.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) An extraordinary meeting of CSO&S Committee would be held in August to discuss the draft Home to School Transport Policy;
- 2) The CSO&S Committee recommends that the feedback received in the 2020/21 transport survey be considered in the drawing up of the new policy;
- 3) Information about the training for drives and escorts will be provided for discussion at the extraordinary meeting.

11. IMPACT OF THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Viki Elliott-King presented the Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis report and highlighted the following points:

- A cost of living crisis emergency was declared by the Council in 2022;
- A group was set up called the Hardship Alliance, comprising representatives from the Council, Citizens Advice, Age UK Berkshire, First Days Children's Charity and Wokingham United Charities;
- At the time, it was quickly recognised that this crisis would affect people who had never had any contact with the Council before, therefore it was important to ensure that the communication was effective;
- A lot of data was gathered, which enabled a focused response;
- £25k was raised with crowdfunding, this was matched by WBC and Wokingham Charities United, totalling £75k;
- There was a DfE funded holiday activities and food programme. Demand for this provision doubled this year
- The graphs in the report showed that there were more people living in poverty;
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals had increased from 5% in 2013 to 9% now;
- Single parent families were struggling the most and seeking support from food banks;
- The Household Support Fund was still available because it was still needed.

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

- The Chairman asked what was the likely impact on demand for services of the new financial stress caused by the increase in mortgage repayments?
- Viki Elliott-King stated that Wokingham had a high number of people with heavy mortgages, so the current situation was likely to put a lot of stress on families who were not normally known to Children's Services. However, it was difficult to know if this would cause an increase in demand for services;
- Ming Zhang believed that the current crisis could have an indirect negative impact, for example in the recruitment of teachers. Newly qualified teachers wanting to buy a house may be discouraged from moving into Wokingham; the same could apply to the recruitment of social workers;
- Adam Davis agreed that there could be an impact on the recruitment of social workers. He added that it was difficult to make an analysis of the impact of the current crisis, this analysis may be possible in the future;
- Councillor Gray wondered if there was over-reliance on charities, and asked what would happen if charities could not cope with the increase in demand?
- Viki Elliott-King confirmed that charities were starting to struggle to keep up with the demand, the Council worked very closely with charities and was trying to help as much as possible;

- The Chairman suggested inviting representatives from the Hardship Alliance to attend a meeting to review the progress made to date;
- Councillor Pittock expressed concern about the difficulties in relation to the rental market;
- Councillor Cunnington asked if there was any indication that there were children in the borough that were not eating properly?
- Viki Elliott-King stated that the Council had a really good relationship with schools, and it was believed that schools would communicate any concerns to the Council (including about children who were not in receipt of free school meals).

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Officers be thanked for the very comprehensive report;
- 2) The CSO&S Committee notes the response to date to children's, young people's and families support needs during the ongoing cost of living crisis;
- 3) The CSO&S Committee receives a brief update at the 6 September 2023 meeting. At that meeting the Committee will decide how to proceed with further updates, including when to invite the Hardship Alliance representatives for a review of the progress being made since the last time they attended a meeting of the CSO&S Committee.

12. ILACS OFSTED UPDATE AND ACTION PLAN

The Chairman pointed out that the action plan would be discussed at a later meeting as this was currently being drafted. Helen Watson added that there was an Improvement Board in place which was overseeing the action plan.

Adam Davis and Helen Watson shared a presentation, and the following points were highlighted:

- ILACS stood for Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services. Such inspections were usually conducted every three years;
- Unlike focused inspections, ILACS looked into all the work carried out by Children's Services, all the way through from Early Help to Care Leavers;
- A self-evaluation document existed which contained details of the services' own assessment of its performance. An annual conversation with Ofsted was carried out in which this document was discussed;
- Ofsted had included Care Leavers as an area of focus since the beginning of 2023;
- An ILACS inspection lasted for three weeks, and there was no warning of the inspection. The inspection was triggered by a phone call to the Director for Children's Services;
- In the first week of inspection Ofsted gathered a lot of information about the current activities being carried out and started to develop some lines of enquiry;
- In the second week inspectors carried out visits, interviews, observations and other interactions with various people (Members, Officers, CIC, prospective adopters, social workers and others);
- Of note was the fact that Wokingham received the same number of inspectors as other much larger local authorities, making the process disproportionate;
- Ofsted met with many officers, children and the Executive Member for Children's Services;

- Ofsted had an education inspector who spent 2 days on site looking at the work undertaken by the Virtual School;
- Ofsted operated as deficit model, there were always recommendations for improvement. The findings were listed in the report;
- The report also contained many positive comments;
- The judgement was 'requires improvement to become good', with areas where the service was 'good';
- Much progress had been made since the last inspection in 2019;
- The service was aware of what is needed to achieve a good rating in the future.

Councillor Cunnington asked:

- Were there any surprises with the gradings given?
- Were there any themes that had been identified that explained why improvement in the grading had not been made?
- Would there be backing from the Executive to put things right where they needed improvement?

Helen Watson explained that this was not a like for like comparison with the 2019 inspection. This inspection included a new judgement area - the scrutiny of the services provided to Care Leavers, which was introduced in January 2023.

Helen Watson sat in the Ofsted Consultative Forum, representing the South East region. Since January 2023, there had been very forensic investigations of the experiences of Care Leavers. She added that the grading of 'requires improvement' was very vast, it ranged from very near to inadequate to being on the cusp of good. There were clear signs from the conversations had with Ofsted that the service was close to good.

Adam Davis observed that the language used in the report suggested that services were good but there could be more consistency in throughout. He added that the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis being impacted the services. Ofsted was interested to know 'how well do we know ourselves?'

The Chairman asked if officers felt that they fully understood the comments made in the report?

Councillor Bray stated that she was confused by the fact that Ofsted had praised a particular team saying that staff were able to take initiative, they had good decision making and their judgement was excellent, and at the same time they were criticized because their managers did not intervene and supervise them sufficiently.

Councillor Bray was confident that progress had been made and there were areas that were very close to good. She believed that officers knew what they needed to do and reassured the Committee that Executive would back the service improvement plan.

Councillor Gray asked if Ofsted offered any support with the improvement plan? Helen Watson confirmed that they did not. A focused visit was expected in the future, where Ofsted would test the improvements being made. The service carried out a self-evaluation exercise annually.

Adam Davis explained that the service's improvement plan covered a broader area, it did not just focus on Ofsted inspections.

In response to a question, Helen Watson stated that a number of peer reviews had been undertaken in the last year and a half.

Councillor Bray drew attention to the fact that the stress caused by Ofsted judgements in local authority's staff was not documented in the media in the same way that it was known that schools' Ofsted caused stress. However, this was a very stressful time for members of staff.

Councillor Bray added that Ofsted did not raise any safeguarding concerns.

The Chairman noted that support had been given to staff during the inspection, that was much appreciated.

Councillor Chadwick asked if there were any external factors which were outside of the Council's control which had contributed to the "requires improvement" judgement?

Helen Watson referenced workforce challenges, there had been some staff sickness absence in the six month period prior to the inspection. This factor had affected the timeliness of certain services. She mentioned that other factors were the effectiveness of services provided by other agencies such as Health (for example in relation to the timeliness of health assessments).

Adam Davis explained that the timing of an Ofsted visit could reflect on the overall result of the inspection.

Councillor Pittock noted that it was unfair that Wokingham received the same number of inspectors as other much larger local authorities. He wondered if this issue could be raised with the government?

Helen Watson informed that she had challenged this point and unfortunately had had no success. Only very small local authorities had fewer inspectors. Adam Davis added that 'requires improvement' local authorities had three weeks of inspections, whereas 'good' local authorities had two weeks of inspections.

Councillor Cunnington asked how many members of staff were involved in developing the improvement plan?

Adam Davis explained that the improvement plan was always ongoing. The management team was involved, the whole team had to be onboard for the plan to be successful.

Members agreed that following the review of the improvement plan, the Committee would look at the appropriate way to lobby the persons or organisations in respect of the disproportionate number of inspectors sent to a small local authority.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The report is noted;
- 2) The CSO&S Committee thanks all Children's Services staff and any other department that has been involved in the ILACS Ofsted inspection, and in the development of the improvement plan; and

3) The improvement plan would be reviewed in September and in January.

13. SAFETY VALVE UPDATE

Jonathan Wilding, Safety Valve / SEND Consultant and Ming Zhang presented the update.

During the presentation the following points were highlighted:

- There were 15 working projects and 4 work streams;
- Early intervention was one of the main work streams;
- The new special schools and the development of post-16 provision were part of the effort to close gaps in provision within the borough;
- The slides contained details of the work being undertaken;
- A consultation was taking place with schools in order to encourage Schools Forum to make a decision in relation to a transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block
- WBC was seeking a 1% transfer, and it was more usual for local authorities to request 0.5% transfer, schools were engaged with the Council, but it was still a difficult ask of schools. Schools Forum decision would be communicated to CSO&S Committee at a later date;
- Progress was being made with Health partners;
- The first Safety Valve report to the DfE had been recently submitted, and it was broadly positive, with most projects on course to deliver the desired outcomes;
- The location of the two new free schools would be agreed by Executive on 29 June;
- There was a good level of interest from academy trusts to run the new schools;
- The aim was to open the new schools in 2026, this was ambitious but achievable;
- The capital bid for an additional £6.3 million was successful. This would enable the development of resource spaces and SEND units attached to mainstream schools and the provision of post 16 provision. An analysis of post 16 needs was going to be undertaken;
- The SEND Strategy was currently in the process of being updated;
- The governance structure of the Safety Valve was shown in one of the slides.

Sarah Clarke confirmed that SEND Voices was working closely with WBC to produce the new SEND Strategy. She expressed concern over provision of resource bases at schools.

Jonathan Wilding explained that the Council was aware of this risk. No places had been decommissioned at this stage, and there were ongoing negotiations with schools to secure places.

Sarah Clarke questioned the governance structure that was presented, that was not the version she had seen before. Jonathan Wilding explained that the papers for this meeting had been published before the final version of the governance structure was agreed.

In response to a question Jonathan Wilding stated that the target was to have 100 more resource base spaces by 2027, spread across primary and secondary schools.

RESOLVED That the Safety Valve update be noted.

14. EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Bray stated that all the issues she wished to talk about were covered in other agenda items.

15. SCHOOL SUFFICIENCY UPDATE

Piers Brunning, School Place Planning Manager presented the School Sufficiency Update report and highlighted the following points:

- There were a number of factors that affected the planning of school places;
- The number of births in the borough had declined since 2012, with an uptick last year;
- International migration - there had been a dramatic increase in the number of families moving into the borough since 2021, however it was not certain how long this would continue;
- Resource constraints within the Council;
- There was an issue of too many school places in Key Stage 1, due to low birth rates;
- St Cecilia school opened to serve the needs of Key Stage 2 children;
- Numbers were rising in the Shinfield area;
- The planning for secondary school places was dependent on the rate of international migration into the borough. It was important to match the place planning with the Council's resources;
- Work was ongoing to develop post 16 provision at Bohunt school;
- There was no immediate risk of insufficient provision of post 16 spaces, however there was over reliance on out of borough provisions, which the Council had no control over.

Councillor Gray asked for clarification in relation the funding of a new school in the Shinfield area through S106 agreement.

Piers Brunning explained that the planning for that school had been agreed many years ago through S106 agreements and those were still in place. The money that the developer offered was tied to the Spencers Wood site; unfortunately this was in the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ), which no one was aware of at the time. The Council was likely to enter conversations with the developer to change the terms of the agreement. However, there was a risk that no agreement would be reached.

Piers Brunning added that there were plenty of surplus school places in adjoining areas. A debate would be had to discuss the need of additional school places and the resource constraints.

The Chairman asked for clarification on the mention of 'creative ways' for securing places for Wokingham children attending Edgbarrow school. Piers Brunning explained that since the production of this report, he was made aware of possible changes in legislation which may allow the Council to use its Growth Fund to support the creation of places in Edgbarrow.

Councillor Bray explained that this was a delicate situation, even if more spaces were created in Edgbarrow, there was no guarantee that they would be given to Wokingham children. Also, Bracknell had surplus secondary school places in other schools, so they were not so keen to increase the number of places in Edgbarrow. However, due to parental preference there were waiting lists for Edgbarrow, and Wokingham children were not necessarily on top of those lists.

Ming Zhang explained that the traditional forecasting methods were no longer applicable to Wokingham, due to the current level of migration. Intelligence was being gathered from

senior school leaders to understand the future need of school places, and this was being discussed with senior officers including the CEO at the Council.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

16. SCHOOLS UPDATE

Gillian Cole, Schools Service Manager addressed the Committee and highlighted the following points:

- Since the last meeting, eight schools had secured 'good' and two schools had secured 'outstanding' in their Ofsted inspections, which was a fantastic result;
- Following the tragic death of a local headteacher, Ofsted and the government had been reviewing processes;
- Changes to the Ofsted inspection process were announced last week with immediate effect:
 - A faster re-inspection process for those schools identified as having safeguarding issues. Within three months Ofsted would come back and if the safeguarding issues had been resolved, they would re-issue the school's grading from requires improvement to good or outstanding;
 - There would be greater clarity around safeguarding expectations;
 - A consultation had been launched on the complaints process that schools could engage with;
 - Schools would be told which year they may be inspected in. That meant that schools would be told the last date they inspection could happen – like a sell by date.

Members were pleased to note the excellent results of recent Ofsted inspections.

Sarah Clarke asked if there was any mechanism to re-assure parents of Wokingham children attending out of the borough schools?

Gillian Cole explained that Ofsted ratings were taken into account in relation to the placement of SEND children.

Ming Zhang stated that other local authorities would have their own improvement teams, and this Council had no power to intervene. He pointed out that there was an element of parental choice to send children to out of borough schools.

However, there was a South East 19 school improvement network meeting with other local authorities, and issues could be discussed in those meetings. Councillor Bray added that Berkshire leaders also discussed informally concerns at particular schools.

RESOLVED That the Schools Update be noted.

17. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Chairman recognised that there was a challenge with the number of items in every agenda. He asked that Members contact him directly with any suggestions in relation to the Forward Programme.

RESOLVED That the Forward Programme be noted.

18. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for item 57, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the schedule 12A of the Act.

19. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN – PART 2

This item was considered in a part 2 session.