

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 28 JUNE 2016 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.00 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Pauline Helliar-Symons (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, Democratic Services Officer
Felicity Budgen, Interim Head of Social Care and Intervention
Brian Grady, Head of Strategic Commissioning
Lisa Humphreys, Head of Social Care and Intervention
Judith Ramsden, Director of Children's Services
Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director Learning and Achievement

The Chairman formally thanked Felicity Budgen for all her work with Children's Services and her valuable contribution to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; this was Felicity's last meeting of the Committee. The Chairman also welcomed all the new Members and Officers to the Committee.

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Shahid Younis.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 February 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

6. MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH) UPDATE

The Committee received a report containing details of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which was set out on agenda pages 13-18. Graham Enright from Thames Valley Police addressed the Committee explaining the contents of the MASH update report.

Graham stated that the implementation of MASH in April 2016 had been a success. Graham pointed out that one of the main benefits of the project was that it offered a safe environment to hold conversations about safeguarding and this helped to speed up the process.

Graham informed that MASH was about sharing information between agencies; the project had been established and signed by the Police, WBC and Health. The Committee was

informed that there were six MASH programmes in Berkshire and they all worked collaboratively. Graham stated that the MASH programme minimised the risk of any information being missed as well as accelerate the processes.

Graham stated that the business processes were working well and these were reviewed regularly at the Strategic and Operational meetings. The group also met with the Police across the six Berkshire Authorities to ensure there was consistent practice.

Graham confirmed that the MASH team in Wokingham consisted of three members of staff, including a supervisor who was an ex Police inspector.

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

- It would take a long time to measure the impact of MASH, but Graham was confident that risk was being minimised as a result of MASH;
- Members questioned how to ensure that information was not missed when people moved to different areas. Graham stated that the Police had a system that linked all areas and were able to track down information about individuals, even when they moved areas. Graham explained that although the Local Authorities Children's Services systems were not linked, any information fed to the Police was shared in the Police's systems;
- Felicity Budgen, Interim Head of Social Care and Intervention confirmed that all agencies which had a role in protecting children were involved in the MASH project;
- Judith Ramsden, Director for Children's Services confirmed that people were encouraged to report concerns about safeguarding in the same manner as before. It was for MASH to review this information and act accordingly;
- Felicity emphasized that it had been decided by all the agencies involved that there would not be a launch of MASH as this could cause confusion about referrals to the Local Authority. Felicity stated that the telephone number and processes had not changed, the public and partners were still required to phone the usual number and if appropriate the referral would be subject to the MASH process;
- Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Executive Member for Children's Services reminded councillors of their privileged position in the community and urged them to raise awareness and to call the services if they felt in any way concerned about safeguarding;
- Members questioned if the numbers were widely available and known to the public, Officers felt confident that they were. However, Judith believed it was important not to become complacent and stated that she would take the issue of raising awareness to the Safeguarding Board;
- In response to a question, Judith explained that schools were aware of the procedures that should be followed if they had concerns about safeguarding. Also, there were school representatives in the Safeguarding Board. Judith reported that the recent Ofsted inspection had tested safeguarding awareness in the community and was satisfied with the high level of awareness displayed by the community in Wokingham;
- Councillor Lindsay Ferris expressed concern regarding the safeguarding of children from split families, where the names could change and as a result there was a risk of missing information. He hoped joint work by the six MASH projects would help to diminish this risk;
- Felicity confirmed that the six Local Authorities involved were monitoring the implementation of the project and testing best practice;
- The Committee was informed that MASH was being implemented nationally;
- Judith stated that MASH was not the only system in place to enable safeguarding, there were also other systems already in operation. Judith offered to share with the

committee information about the MARAC map (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) which was another system used to help with safeguarding. The Committee agreed it would be useful to receive information about the MARAC map.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The Committee has reviewed the progress update and requests a progress report at the September meeting;
- 2) The MARAC map be brought for the Committee for consideration.

7. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee considered the Children's Services Performance Indicators report which was set out on agenda pages 19-28. The Chairman, Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons stated that this report had been scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and some questions had been raised. Officers had produced a paper explaining those particular points and this had been circulated to the Members of the Management Committee. As this concerned Children's Services' issues, the Chairman asked that Luciane Bowker, Democratic Services Officer make the document available to all Members of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Laura Blumenthal enquired about the rationale behind the setting up of targets. Brian Grady, Head of Strategic Commissioning explained that this process was being reviewed and once a new system was in place this would be presented to the Committee.

The following indicators were discussed in more detail as follows:

% Looked After Children living within 20 miles of their home

- this was improving, one of the strategies used was to recruit more foster carers. Felicity reported that five or six new foster carers had been recently recruited through the 'Home for Good' initiative which runs via the churches;
- Felicity stated that it would be good to have more foster carers, it was the service's aim to recruit more foster carers by the end of the year, there was ongoing work to try and achieve this target;
- Felicity informed that a lot of people who initially volunteered to be foster carers did not measure properly the impact that being a foster carer would have on their lives. A lot of people had to be turned down and only real potential recruits were considered by the panel. Often the children that needed to be fostered had challenging behaviours as a result of their early experiences in life. However, Felicity stated that there were different types of needs for different types of foster carers;
- Wokingham had significantly improved the way it treated its foster carers, and the Committee recognised the work that had been undertaken by Felicity and her team to develop a better system.

Reduce the education gap at KS2 level 4 between disadvantaged and other pupils for Reading, Writing and Maths

- Councillor Lindsay Ferris was concerned that not enough was being done to narrow the gap between disadvantaged and other pupils;
- Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement stated that the overall picture in Wokingham was one of improvement, many schools had maintained a 'good' status and this in reality equated to an improvement as the current Ofsted inspection was more rigorous. In Alan's opinion the schools' results reflected an improvement in narrowing the gap;

- Alan stated that there was ongoing work and action plans in place for schools that needed improvement or were causing concern;
- Alan informed that the assessment of the 2015/16 academic year was not yet known and this would be reported to the Committee at its next meeting;
- Judith stated that the service was not complacent, there were many schools which were doing very well, and analyses being undertaken to find out what had worked well and how to extrapolate and get even better results;
- Judith reported that the Government often sent letters to schools, sometimes this was about narrowing the gap, but the letters were not consistent;
- Members asked what monitoring and help could be offered to academy schools. Alan responded the Local Authority's powers relating to academy schools were very limited, it was for the school to determine the level of relationship they wished to have with the Local Authority. Alan informed that only the Regional Schools Commissioner could take action relating to underperforming academy schools;
- Councillor Alison Swaddle reported that Maiden Erlegh had recently received a letter from the Government praising their work in narrowing the gap;
- Alan stated that 100% of maintained secondary schools were rated 'good' or 'better' by Ofsted.

RESOLVED That the Children's Services performance indicators be noted.

8. SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE - OFSTED REPORTS

The Committee considered the Schools Performance – Ofsted Reports as set out on agenda pages 29-64. Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Head of Learning & Achievement introduced the report.

Alan explained that the Forest School's result 'Requires Improvement' had been anticipated by the service, the school had a new Headteacher who had been in her post for 18 months. There were some areas of strength but some areas that needed improvement such as securing progress for disadvantaged pupils. Alan assured the Committee that the school was working hard to improve.

Members were advised that a full report of inspections could be found in the Ofsted website, for the purposes of this meeting it was agreed that it was not necessary to reproduce full reports.

The Committee noted the results of all the schools listed in the report. Members were informed that it was not possible to comment on the Southfield School report as this was currently undergoing investigations. However, Judith confirmed that the school had received an order to convert to academy and at the moment were looking for a sponsor. The Committee would be updated on the investigation's findings in due course.

The Committee was pleased to see the 'good' result achieved by Earley St Peter's CofE School as this represented an improvement since the last inspection. It was noted that the school had a new Headteacher.

The Committee was impressed with the 'good' result achieved by Windmill School at its first inspection.

Alan reported that there was an action plan to help Gorse Ride Junior School following its 'Requires Improvement' result. It was interesting to note that it was the same Governing Body for the Junior and Infant school.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

9. OFSTED ACTION PLAN MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered the Ofsted Action Plan following the single inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children In Care and Care Leavers as set out on agenda pages 63-74.

Judith explained that usually Ofsted would come back after an inspection to revise the action plan, but this had not happened in Wokingham. Judith felt this demonstrated confidence in the service's ability to improve.

Councillor Haitham Taylor stated that there were 12 areas that Ofsted had identified as requiring improvement, and she felt satisfied with the progress made so far.

Judith stated that Ofsted had been impressed that some issues had been discussed at Overview and Scrutiny and also that the service's own self-assessment demonstrated the service understood where improvement was needed.

In response to a question, Brian Grady stated that there had been a time issue with the dates listed in the report, in that the submission date was very close to the deadlines in the report. Brian offered to give an update to the Committee on any of the actions listed in the report. Judith stated that some targets were not time bound, they were continuous work.

Councillor Charlotte Haitham Taylor stated that Children's Services continued to work on a development plan; this would be ready by September.

In response to a question Felicity stated that every Looked After Child had received a card containing their Social Worker contact details. Also, a mystery shopper had tested the system by calling and leaving a message and results had been positive. However, Felicity stated that this work was ongoing as Social Workers could change and it was important to keep monitoring it.

In response to a question Judith stated that there were many different types of inspections, and she did not expect Wokingham would be subject to another full inspection in the next 12 months, however this was difficult to predict. Judith stated that she was planning a peer review in the next few months.

The Committee asked that a progress report be submitted to the September meeting.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the action plan in response to Ofsted recommendations and the progress achieved is noted;
- 2) the Committee requests an update report for the September meeting.

10. FORWARD PROGRAMME

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

13 September 2016

- MASH update / MARAC Plan
- Update on the post Ofsted Action Plan

- 6 month self-assessment plan
- School improvement – narrowing the gap – progress report on schools including the data from 2015/2016 academic year

Date to be confirmed

- Wokingham Safeguarding Children’s Board annual report
- Corporate Parenting Board annual report

The Committee considered suggestions put forward by Councillor Laura Blumenthal which were:

- how children in the Borough are supported in their guidance of career choices and training opportunities (e.g. apprenticeships) either at school or elsewhere;
- how disabled children and their families are supported in education and everyday life;
- young people's mental health and the support they are offered.

The Committee agreed that it would be useful to receive information about the career choices and training opportunities for children in the Borough. However, it was apparent that the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had already reviewed the other two points. The Committee asked that Luciane Bowker circulate the papers relating to those topics to all Committee Members. A decision could be made at the next meeting as to whether there was a need to revise further.

11. TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chairman called a Part 2 urgent item and after discussion the Committee decided to set up a Task and Finish Group.