

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2016 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.22 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Pauline Helliard-Symons (Chairman), Shahid Younis (Vice-Chairman), Laura Blumenthal, Richard Dolinski, Ken Miall, Beth Rowland, Bill Soane, Alison Swaddle and Charlotte Haitham Taylor

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Charlotte Haitham Taylor

Officers Present

Luciane Bowker, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Paul Feven, Interim Head of Strategic Commissioning
Lisa Humphreys, Head of Social Care and Intervention
Judith Ramsden, Director of People Services
Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director of Learning and Achievement

25. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies received.

26. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 September 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

28. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

29. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

30. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee considered the Children's Services Performance Indicators report which was set out in agenda pages 15-24. The Chairman invited Members to put forward their comments and suggestions relating to this item. The following points were raised during the discussion:

% Care proceeding completed in 15/16 within 26 weeks of application

- Councillor Rowland asked for clarification on this indicator. Lisa Humphreys, Head of Social Care and Integration explained that in quarter 2, four care proceedings were completed *past* over the 26 week timescale due to further assessment being required (court discussions). The timetable was controlled by the Court and not the Local Authority.

% Looked After Children living within 20 miles of Berkshire West

- Lisa Humphreys explained that almost all children who were in long term placements out of the Borough had exceptional needs. Some of these children had very complex

needs and disabilities or mental health issues, for which there were no suitable specialist centres in Berkshire. For some of the cases there were only a few centres in the country that were able to cater for this level of need.

Number of schools causing concern

- Councillor Blumenthal was curious to know why there was a target of five schools for this indicator. Alan Stubbersfield, Interim Assistant Director of Learning and Achievement endorsed the aspiration to have no schools causing concern. Alan stated that this indicator was used to identify schools that caused concern and to start the process to help them;
- Judith Ramsden, Director of People Services confirmed that the target was not relevant for this indicator, but it was important to anticipate which schools were causing concern;
- Councillor Rowland suggested that the target should be zero and Officers were in agreement.

The Chairman stated that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee would be reviewing this report at its meeting the following week. The Chairman emphasized that it was important to have explanations for the red indicators as this was likely to be discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Judith Ramsden informed that the red indicator relating to *% children who became subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) who are subject to a CPP for a second or subsequent time within 24 months* was due to the quality of audit. This family had been referred when it did not need to be referred by the early help service. Judith was not concerned about this as there was a clear understanding of the court measures by Children's Services.

RESOLVED: That the Children's Services Performance Indicators be noted.

31. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND NARROWING THE GAP

The Committee considered the School Performance and Narrowing the Gaps; Preliminary Provisional Data for 2016 report which was set out in agenda pages 25-38.

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

- Councillor Miall asked that figures be included in the report as well as percentages to enable a clearer understanding of the data. Numbers should be provided throughout the whole report;
- The Chairman endorsed the request for the inclusion of figures and also asked that the final report in March include types of school (for example free school, academy, maintained);
- Councillor Younis noted that where the report referred to 50% of special schools, this related to one school as there were only two special schools in the Borough;
- Councillor Dolinski raised concern about the decline in the GCSE results. Alan explained that schools were focusing on the new assessment system and not on the GCSE results. Alan stated that despite this result, Wokingham had the thirteenth best GCSE result nationally;
- Alan stated that Wokingham secondary schools were in the top 10% of schools in the country;
- Members were interested to know more about the journey from entry to leaving school. Alan stated that schools faced a challenging situation when children came from high attaining primary schools, it was difficult to demonstrate progress;

- The Chairman asked for value added figures of KS1 and KS2, Alan agreed to provide these in the final report;
- Councillor Haitham Taylor pointed out that although there may be some variation in schools results, on the whole most schools had done really well;
- Councillor Swaddle asked that where there were references to the national average, that the figures be included too;
- Councillor Soane noted that 'writing' was a weak area in Wokingham. He asked if this issue related to specific schools or to all schools in the Borough. Alan explained that this was an issue from Early Years to KS2, but not for GCSE level onwards. There were no concerns over reading, grammar and punctuation. Alan stated that writing was a key focus and had been improving for the past three years as demonstrated in the graph on page 30 of the agenda. This was the result of work undertaken with Early Years to improve writing. Alan informed that nine schools had been identified as needing improvement in writing and School Improvement Officers were working with these schools. Alan stated that he had visited schools and that he felt confident that children's writing was good, some of the work he saw at years 5 and 6, a few years ago would have been acceptable at year 8. It was not the case that children could not write; but their reading and grammar tended to be better. Alan stated that phonics had achieved a 96% pass test rate, which was much higher than three years ago;
- The Chairman asked what could be done in relation to the gap between boys and girls performance. Alan informed that the following actions were being undertaken by the Local Authority to tackle the gap:
 - Analysing data
 - Individualising targets
 - Challenging Headteachers
 - Looking to use IT to motivate boys
- The Chairman noted that most primary schools teachers were women, and this was not helpful for boys;
- Councillor Swaddle asked if boys were taught separately from girls at secondary level. Alan stated that they were not and that there were mixed reviews on this type of approach;
- Judith Ramsden was more concerned as to why Wokingham girls were not outperforming their peers nationally;
- In response to a question, Judith confirmed that libraries were actively encouraging all in the community to use their services;
- The Chairman asked that the report include the GCSE results of Wokingham children attending neighbouring authorities schools (for example Yately and Edgbarrow schools). The Chairman explained that Wokingham Without ward did not have a Wokingham school as a designated area school;
- Councillor Younis felt it would be useful to know the data around GCSE results of boys and girls. He believed that once boys matured the attainment gap closed but he would like to see evidence of this;
- The Chairman was pleased to note the effort that had been put into narrowing the gap and the initiatives described in the report;
- Councillor Younis asked how Officers ensured that Pupil Premium was used effectively. Alan stated that there were checks in schools carried out by School Premium Officers. Judith stated that there were conversations with Headteachers; Officers evaluated the impact more often than Ofsted, and schools were obliged to show the audit trail for Pupil Premium;
- Councillor Rowland was interested to know if Pupil Premium was used more for children with English as an additional language or children from other minority groups.

Alan explained there was a small number of Black Minority Ethnicity (BME) children in Wokingham;

- Councillor Swaddled stated that school Governors should be able to challenge Headteachers regarding the use of Pupil Premium. Alan confirmed that Governors knew that they had to challenge Headteachers and Ofsted reports reflected that;
- Alan informed that his team was working with other Local Authorities to reflect on the best ways to narrow the gap in achievement for the most vulnerable. Wokingham had a small number of pupils who accessed free school meals, and was sharing this challenge with similar Local Authorities which Ofsted had recognised as struggling to narrow gaps consistently;
- Judith commented that it was easier for larger authorities in more deprived areas to demonstrated improvement in narrowing the gap then for smaller authorities in affluent areas such as Wokingham.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The actions identified in the report be supported;
- 2) Further reports following subsequent national data releases will include the following:
 - a) Figures throughout the report;
 - b) School differentiation (academy, free school, maintained);
 - c) Value added figure for KS1 and KS2;
 - d) Additional information on Wokingham children attending neighbouring schools;
 - e) GCSE results identifying boys and girls attainment;
 - f) Information relating to children with English as an additional language and Black Minority Ethnicity.

32. SCHOOLS OFSTED REPORTS

The Committee considered the Schools Ofsted Performance report which was set out on pages 39-64 of the agenda.

The Chairman stated that the table on pages 41-43 was particularly useful, easy to understand and compare. Alan explained that the comments column were extracts from the Ofsted reports made in relation to the Local Authority support and intervention. Where the column was left blank, this was because there were no comments in relation to the Local Authority.

The Committee discussed the item and following points were made:

Bearwood Primary School – Requires Improvement

- Alan stated that this school was previously rated requires improvement, and had not yet improved, this was a cause of concern;
- The school had received a preliminary warning letter from the Local Authority;
- Alan felt satisfied that the Headteacher was taking the necessary measures to improve the school;
- There was now a new Chair of Governors.

Oaklands Junior School – Good

- The Committee was pleased to note that the school continued to be good;
- The Committee noted the Ofsted comment about improvement in value added at the school;

- Alan explained that this was a letter to the Headteacher rather than a full report. This format was used when schools had previously been rated good.

All Saints CofE (Aided) Primary School – Good

- The Committee noted that the school had used the previous inspection result of requires improvement to make the necessary changes to achieve this positive result;
- It was noted that the Early Years provision was rated outstanding, which was an excellent result. Alan stated that one individual had made a significant contribution to this result.

Keep Hatch Primary School – Requires Improvement

- Councillor Younis stated that it was concerning when schools received a requires improvement Ofsted result as this discouraged parents from applying to those schools;
- Judith stated that it was important to help Headteacher and Governors to be prepared for Ofsted inspections. The Local Authority had supported a number of schools which had remained good.

Members emphasized the importance of making sure that schools did not miss out on a good Ofsted result because of basic mistakes. Alan stated that the School Improvement Board supported schools to make sure that basic things were not missed.

In response to a question Alan stated that it could take 18 months to turn around a school and achieve a better Ofsted result.

Judith was curious to know how many Councillors were governors in the local schools. She stated that there could be a wealth of experience to be added to governing bodies. Councillor Swaddle state that Members used to be sent a list of governor vacancies. This would be a way to interest Members in potentially taking up positions as governors.

Councillor Dolinski would like to know how much effort and time had taken to improve schools, it would be interesting to have a measure.

Judith stated that the Local Authority was always striving to do better, but she had great confidence in the School Improvement team. In response to a question Judith stated that there were 4.6 School Improvement Officers in the team. There was currently a vacancy, the Local Authority bought this services when needed.

Councillor Rowland suggested that the Local Authority encouraged the partnership and engagement of outstanding Headteachers to share good practices.

Members felt that governors should be strongly encouraged to take up all the training offered by the Local Authority to enable them to monitor and challenge Headteachers. The Chairman stated that it would be interesting to compare schools Ofsted results with governors level of training.

RESOLVED: That the answers to the questions raised during discussion be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

33. POST OFSTED ACTION PLAN AND SIX MONTH SELF-ASSESSMENT PLAN

The Committee considered the report outlining the Ofsted inspection action plan update which was set out on agenda pages 65 – 76. The Committee was satisfied with the

progress made so far and the Chairman thanked Judith Ramsden and her team for all the work which had been undertaken post Ofsted.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

34. EQUALITY SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Committee considered the Equalities Support for Young People report which was set out on agenda pages 77-81.

Councillor Miall stated that although there were some minor details missing, he was pleased with the strategy proposed in the report.

Alan Stubbersfield explained that the strategy was going to be communicated to schools.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

35. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its forward programme for the remainder of the municipal year. The following items were added to the programme:

17 January 2017

- Answers to the questions raised during the meeting
- Social Worker recruitment and retention strategy update / approach on Social Worker training
- Pathways to learning – Post 16 education - Career choice and guidance / training opportunities for children in the Borough
- Wokingham Multi Academy Trust update

21 March 2017

- Practice framework of Children's Services update
- 21 Century Council New structure – changes for Children's Services

It was agreed that the Corporate Parenting Board annual report and the Wokingham Safeguarding Children's Board annual report would be discussed in the May 2017 meeting.

36. 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 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as appropriate.

37. SOUTHFIELD SPECIAL SCHOOL

The Committee considered an exempt update report relating to Southfield Special School.

Members wanted to know if the Local Authority had done enough to prevent the school from going into special measures, and how the Local Authority was helping the school to improve. Judith Ramsden stated that the Children's Services School Improvement Team had become more robust in the last two years. Judith confirmed that Children's Services

had been aware of issues in the school and going forward the Local Authority intended to make more use of pre-warning letters.

Members discussed the idea of being notified of any schools causing concern that had been issued with a pre-warning notice. Judith explained that as part of the process, the Executive Member for Children's Services was regularly briefed on the schools that were causing concern. There were confidentially issues around underperforming schools, so if this was to be reported to Overview and Scrutiny, it should be under a part 2 session.

The Chairman asked that once the investigation was finalised, the Committee receive an update on what lessons were learnt from the whole process.

RESOLVED That

- 1) a report containing the lessons learnt from the Southfields Special School failings be brought to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review;
- 2) a regular part 2 reports listing schools causing concern be sent to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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