

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2017 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.30 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Laura Blumenthal (Vice-Chairman), Parry Bath, Ken Miall, Beth Rowland and Shahid Younis

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: UllaKarin Clark

Officers Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Election Services Specialist
Lisa Humphreys, Head of Social Care and Intervention
Judith Ramsden, Director of People Services
Jane Winterbone, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement
Caroline McKenna, Interim Quality, Assurance and Safeguarding Manager

14. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Kate Haines, Pauline Helliars-Symons and Bill Soane.

15. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 June 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising

Members welcomed the paper that was circulated prior to the meeting containing a list of all schools in the Borough and their current Ofsted ratings. It was agreed that this list was very useful and should be included as a standing item in future agendas.

Child Care Sufficiency 2017 – page 10 of the agenda

Judith Ramsden, Director of People Services agreed to provide a response to the questions raised in relation to the mechanism for payment to providers and the falling numbers of childminders in the Borough.

Peer Review Report – page 11 of the agenda

Judith Ramsden explained that the Joint Targeted Area Inspection, which was statutory, superseded the Peer Review and this would be discussed during the meeting.

Glossary of acronyms – page 12 of the agenda

Jane Winterbone, Interim Head of Learning and Achievement explained that she had included full names in the body of the report. However, after a brief discussion, Members asked that a glossary of acronyms be included, as well as full names in the report.

16. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

A declaration of interest was submitted from Councillor Beth Rowland on the basis that she was a governor at Highwood Primary School.

17. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

18. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

19. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee received the Children's Services Performance Indicators report which was set out in agenda pages 13-22. The Chair invited Members to comment and raise questions.

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

- Councillor Younis was interested to understand the criteria for selecting the indicators;
- Judith Ramsden explained that some indicators were set nationally and others were local targets set by the senior leadership team. She informed that there was now an opportunity to update the indicators, discussions had already started at Executive Briefing;
- Judith Ramsden believed that the Committee had been provided the rationale behind the selection of indicators in previous meetings. Members felt that it would be useful to include a brief explanatory note in the report;
- Members agreed that it would be useful to differentiate between national and local targets in future reports;
- Councillor Younis was curious to know how often the targets were reviewed and how they linked to the 21 Century Council;
- Judith Ramsden stated that it was important to set targets and to allow time to analyse the statistics. She explained that much more detailed information was available to the leadership team and this information was used to understand the local needs. She offered to bring an explanation about the target setting to enable the Committee to consider it;
- In response to a question Lisa Humphreys, Head of Social Care and Intervention informed that in relation to Social Care, real time information was already available. The system was refreshed on a 12 hour cycle, accurate information was obtainable anytime, this was not linked to 21st Century Council programme;
- Officers recognised that the information contained in the Key Performance Indicators reports was produced quarterly and therefore it was not always the most recent set of data being presented to the Committee. It was suggested that in the future, meetings should be scheduled to coincide with the production of quarterly data to enable the Committee to analyse the most recent set of data;
- Councillor Miall expressed concern over the *%Child Protection visits due in the period that were on time (within 10 days of the previous visit)* indicator. Lisa Humphreys explained that the statutory duty was 42 days, but the local target was 10 days. Members were informed that part of the reason this indicator was 'red' was due to Social Workers having difficulty accessing the children, this related to two families. Members were assured that all appropriate and proportionate steps were being taken to safeguard the children in accordance with the level of risk and the children's plan. Lisa explained that Social Workers did not have a legal right to see the children without parental consent, therefore sometimes a visit may have taken place but if the child was not seen by the Social Worker, this visit could not count as a CP visit. Lisa assured Members that the children were well protected and that clear guidelines were followed;
- Lisa stated that with regards to referrals, following a notification, in the majority of cases a visit was undertaken within two to three hours, the requirement in law was for 24 hours;

- Councillor Miall sought clarification on the Local Authority's responsibility in relation to children from neighbouring authorities who moved into Wokingham. Lisa Humphreys stated that this depended on the arrangement and where the referral had been generated. Usually the authority where the child lived remained responsible even when the child had to be placed with different authority. If the family moved and the child was subject to a child protection order, there would be an arrangement to move the responsibility;
- Councillor Blumenthal questioned why Care Leavers were included in the *Permanency 1* indicator. Lisa Humphreys explained that there had been much debate amongst Officers to try and cut the data in different ways. However, because this related to such small numbers, it was very difficult to cut the data differently;
- Judith Ramsden stated that it was important to have continuity of indicators to enable its analysis over a period of time. The regulator should be able to see the performance and the narrative would give a more rounded view, where 'red' was identified this meant the service was curious about it and looking to promote improvement;
- Members noted the achievement of an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating by one of the primary schools and asked that a letter of congratulations be sent to the school;
- In response to a question Jane Winterbone informed that it was expected that Northern House would be inspected sometime in the next two years.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Future meetings of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be scheduled to coincide with the production of the key performance indicators quarterly reports;
- 2) An explanatory note about the criteria used for setting key performance indicators will be included in future reports and the indicators will be marked 'national' or 'local' and
- 3) The report be noted.

20. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OFSTED REPORTS

The Committee considered the School Performance Indicators and Ofsted Reports which were set out in agenda pages 23-28.

Jane Winterbone informed that since the production of the report, Ofsted inspection results of two schools had been released. These were: Colleton Primary which achieved 'good' and Willowbank Infant which also achieved 'good'.

Members were pleased to note the outstanding result achieved by Evendons Primary and were interested to know if it was rare for a new school to achieve outstanding at its first inspection. Jane Winterbone stated that it was rare but not impossible. Jane explained that generally new schools often found it difficult to sustain good results as the school expanded and more school years were added. However, in relation to this particular school, the School Improvement Officer felt that they had obtained a secure outstanding and there were no concerns identified by Officers. The school was now in a position to support other schools.

Councillor Blumenthal pointed out that the Holt school had had its last inspection in 2008 and was curious about it. Jane explained that it could take a long time between inspections when a school held an outstanding rating and their results were consistently good. Jane stated that in such cases it was important to encourage schools to carry out

regular self-evaluations. In response to a question Jane stated that it was impossible to predict when a school would be inspected.

In response to a question Jane stated that it was very difficult for large secondary schools to achieve outstanding under the current inspection regime. In order for a school to achieve outstanding, it was necessary to obtain the same level of progress in all cohorts, which was extremely difficult. It had been observed that outstanding schools were located in less socially deprived areas.

Jane was pleased to point out that there were many schools that had moved from 'require improvement' to 'good'.

Members confirmed that they would like the Ofsted ratings of all schools in the Borough to be included as a standing item in every agenda. Members were aware that this report was subject to last minute changes but felt it would still be preferable to receive the report in advance and be given updates at the meeting if necessary.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) A list containing current Ofsted reports of all schools in the Borough would be included as a standing item in all agendas of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and
- 2) The report be noted.

21. SOCIAL WORK - RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Committee received the Social Work – Recruitment and Retention report which was set out in agenda pages 29-32.

Lisa Humphreys addressed the Committee stating that Social Worker recruitment and retention remained a high priority for the service. She reported that the workforce was currently stable, with more than 80% of permanent staff with tenure of 18 months or more.

Councillor Bath asked if the workforce stability was still considered a challenge. Lisa explained that it was important to maintain this as priority and to continue offering incentives such as work life balance, competitive pay and benefits in order to retain and recruit Social Workers. Lisa also stated that the pool of recruitment was very small in the area. Judith Ramsden confirmed that the situation could rapidly change if this was not considered a priority. It was important to note that Wokingham teams were very small, if only two people left there would be a significant impact on percentages.

Councillor Younis stated that Social Worker recruitment and retention was a challenge for other Local Authorities too, and that the market was competitive. He stated that this situation was unlikely to change.

Councillor Blumenthal asked how Wokingham compared to its neighbours. Lisa Humphreys stated that an 80% permanency in staff workforce was the national expectation. However, it took a lot of effort to keep this figure.

Councillor Blumenthal noted that the service used the 'Step Up' programme in partnership with Winchester University and asked why Reading University was not being used. Lisa explained that there were various pathways to becoming a Social Worker and the

Winchester University's 'Step Up' course was nationally recognized for its quality of training. It had been useful for Wokingham to partner with Hampshire who was a national pilot and in favour with the Department of Education around learning and development of Social Work training. Hampshire had organised the partnership for the south coast and Wokingham had benefited from some of their resources.

Lisa stated that the service was considering expanding the partnership with Bucks University which also focused on the Step Up programme in this area. Reading University offered Social Work training but did not have a recognised Step Up programme.

Lisa explained that the Step Up programme was for post graduate students who had demonstrated academic ability and also vocational intention.

In response to a question Lisa stated that nine students were being supported by Wokingham this year, not all were 'Step Up' students.

In response to a question Lisa stated that there was no intention at the moment to recruit Social Workers from Australia, the focus was on developing a progression programme and improving retention.

Councillor Younis asked if Officers expected an impact on the workforce as a result of Brexit. Judith Ramsden stated that there could be a 'pinch point' and it was important to be aware of that.

RESOLVED That the report containing information on the actions taken by Children's Social Care and HR to manage the workforce and recruit staff permanently be noted.

22. JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION

The Committee considered the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) report which was set out in agenda pages 33-38.

Judith Ramsden stated that the Joint Targeted Area Inspection was an inspection of an area by four inspectorates, Ofsted (who led the inspection), the Care Quality Commission, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. Together they looked at the arrangements to safeguard children and for this inspection they undertook a deeper investigation into 'children experiencing neglect'. The inspection was not graded, but its outcomes would be published nationally in the form of a letter.

Judith Ramsden stated that the inspection had offered reflections on how to improve performance.

The Committee was informed that the team had been suitably trained for the inspection.

Caroline McKenna, Interim Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Manager informed that she had chaired the JTAI action plan meeting. The meeting had had full attendance and work was being undertaken to compose an action plan. She emphasised that it was important to make sure the plan was robust and that it would stand up to scrutiny before its submission. She stated that another meeting was scheduled to finalise the action plan. It was important to make sure partners were clear of what was expected of them.

Members felt that the report was ambiguous in relation to the partnership with the Police. Judith Ramsden stated that she had raised this issue with the regulator and asked

Members to see through the language. Judith ensured that there was commitment amongst all the partners.

In response to a question Judith Ramsden stated that the findings contained in the report validated the service's own self-assessment. Judith stated that she had not agreed with one of the comments around quality assurance and performance management and she had shared her view with the regulator.

In response to a question Caroline McKenna informed that Peterborough's report was already available online and that there would be seven other local authorities undergoing similar assessments.

When questioned about why Wokingham had been chosen for this inspection, Judith explained that it was due to the fact that some Local Authorities had recently undergone other inspections and the availability of senior Officers to undertake an inspection.

Judith Ramsden wished to record her gratitude to her team for their work during the inspection, which had been completely unexpected.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

23. SEND AND DISABILITY SELF ASSESSMENT

The Committee received the SEND and Disability Self-Assessment report which was set out in agenda pages 39-42.

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

- Lisa Humphreys confirmed that a date had not yet been set for an area SEND Ofsted inspection, but this was anticipated in the near future;
- Councillor Blumenthal questioned the drop in the numbers of Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) from 776 in 2016 to 561 in July 2017. Lisa Humphreys explained that all existing Special Educational Needs Statements (SEN) were in the process of being converted to EHCP. The target was to complete all conversions by March 2018 and this was on track to be achieved;
- When questioned about the 20 week deadline to complete assessments, Lisa Humphreys explained that this was a national target. Members were informed that the process involved consulting the family and various professionals in Health, Social Care and Education. Officers felt confident that 20 weeks was a reasonable target due to the complexity of the process. Members were informed that a child would be referred for an EHCP when the school was not able to meet the child's needs.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

24. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Forward Programme for the remainder of the 2017/18 municipal year.

The following items were added:

14 November 2017

- Joint Targeted Area Inspection Action Plan
- Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

- Schools Performance – a report analysing A-Levels, GCSE and Key Stage 2 2017 results

20 March

- Update report on the development of the Childcare Sufficiency Report

The annual report of Corporate Parenting Board will be included to the forward plan, the exact date is to be confirmed.

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

26. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS: SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

This item was considered and discussed in a Part 2 session.

RESOLVED That the contents of the report be noted.

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