

## UPDATE REPORTS FROM CHAIRMEN OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

### **Report from Chairman of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee, December 2015**

There were two main items of business – an update of the work of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), and the report of the independent review of leadership and Governance in Children's Services.

The MASH report formed a context for the independent review report. There is now a strategic and operational group in place to take the MASH project forward; an Information Sharing Agreement has been established between the Police, WBC and Health, and the final group, Probation, was due to sign this in December soon after the Children's Scrutiny committee: the degree of joined up work between these organisations has motored on as a result of this work. Accommodation will be in Shute End, and a MASH supervisor has been recruited by the Police and starts work on January 7<sup>th</sup>; a Domestic Abuse Risk Assessor is in post and ready to start and a support worker is training and should be ready to start in February; and training generally, for all Police and multi-agency staff, will take place between January and April. A sub group is working on business processes to ensure these are consistent between WBC and the Police, and workshops will take place in January to test the system and the process. As a result of all this work, the Police and WBC, whose representatives were at the meeting, are confident that partnership is working well and information is being shared willingly by all partners to enhance the safety of vulnerable children. Although Wokingham was one of the first to establish this kind of group, it is now fairly general throughout the country as a whole.

The independent review of Leadership and Governance in Children's Services as applied to the needs of vulnerable children and families and young people at risk of harm through child sexual exploitation was commissioned by the Leader of the Council and supported by members, specifically those on the Children's Scrutiny committee; it was also supported by officers. The report commented positively on the strength of leadership and governance by officers and members, and that this has had a strong influence on the management of services for children in Wokingham. Senior leaders, from the CEO downwards, were found to be very aware of their statutory responsibilities to provide high quality services to vulnerable children in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, both internal and external, and the CEO and Director of Children's Services were able to demonstrate extensive knowledge of the issues pertinent to children's services, and are ensuring a stable workforce who are "innovative and improvement focused ..... (with) administrative processes as effective and efficient as they can be." There is a learning culture, and the partnership with the university to provide 25 places for employees wishing to train as social workers was commented on positively as was the Eileen Munro Innovation programme. The Children and Young People's Plan is "impressive"; and CSE is very much in the agenda of the local safeguarding board as it requires multi agency response; the Board was regarded as a "robust" forum for sharing best practice across Berkshire: it is working on raising awareness of the nature of CSE, identifying persons and locations where exploitation may take place, prosecuting the perpetrators, and providing prevention strategies and support for young people. There are CSE champions in every childcare team and these have received specific training on all issues relating to CSE, and help and

guide their colleagues as the need arises. The reviewer met a wide section of staff at all grades and said that overwhelmingly they had positive experiences to tell in terms of the culture of the organisation. Most staff said that senior staff were visible and approachable, although there was the suggestion that those based outside Shute End would like to see more of the senior staff. Other areas suggested to work on were that there should be a greater sharing of the Council's vision by all members and senior officers with plans and strategies in greater alignment, the role of Deputy Lead Member for Children's Services needs to be less ambiguously defined, there should be clearer lines of accountability, some committees need to update their terms of reference, the Corporate Parenting Board should have greater prominence in the Corporate assurance framework, ongoing work with parents' and children's engagement should be strengthened further, and there should be more meetings between the DCS and Lead Member and the Director of Health and Wellbeing and his lead Member. One area that the committee discussed at some length was the need for adults to become as skilled in social media as children, young people and abusers. The Inspector's recommendations will be picked up alongside the action plan that will result from the recent Ofsted inspection.

Other than these two reports, there was an update on the Primary Schools strategy which will go to Executive in the new year, and Ofsted reports of St. Dominic Savio Primary School (which has improved from requiring improvement to Good) and St. Nicholas Primary School (which continues to be Good). Performance indicators had not changed since the previous meeting and were all green apart from care proceedings all being completed within 26 weeks and this was due to factors outside WBC's control such as other countries being involved.

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