



Committee and Date

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**Councillor Mrs J B Barrow, Safe and Confident Communities Scrutiny
Committee Chairman**

**SAFE AND CONFIDENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12**

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report presents an overview of the work of the Safe and Confident Communities Scrutiny Committee in 2011-12, up to and including July 2012.

2.0 What have we done?

2.1 Since the last Annual Report in July 2011, the Committee has met nine times, including two meetings held jointly with the Healthy Communities Scrutiny Committee. In addition, three Task and Finish Groups have concluded their work and another three are on-going at the present time.

2.2 Key themes in the Work Programme have been adult social care; support for carers; and safeguarding for adults and children.

2.3 A Task and Finish Group on Adult Social Care was set up in the summer of 2011, which reported to Scrutiny and Cabinet in October 2011. The focus of this Task and Finish Group was reablement, prevention and assistive technology. Members made 32 recommendations to Cabinet, which were well-received, and which have helped to shape the future direction of adult social care services. In July 2012, Members were delighted to hear about the considerable progress which has been made on the Task and Finish Group recommendations. The Committee will continue to monitor this important area of work.

2.4 The Committee has also considered the support available to carers. After hearing first-hand from young carers, the Committee identified several areas where more could be done, including the need to assist carers aged 18+ through the transition from being young carers supported by the British Red Cross Young Carers Service to becoming adult carers. The co-opted Member from the Voluntary and Community Sector arranged a day out in the summer holidays for young carers. Members also heard about changes to Carers Assessments for adult carers and noted Carers Rights Day which will take place on 30 November.

2.5 Safeguarding of both children and adults has been a regular feature of the Committee's Work Programme. The Committee scrutinised progress against the Improvement Plan following the 2011 Ofsted Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspection. At the inspection, all outcomes for Safeguarding had been either Adequate or Good, and for Looked After Children, the overall outcome had been Good, with one area Outstanding. More recently, the Committee had an opportunity to comment on the findings of the Safeguarding Peer Review which took place in May 2012. There have been regular reports on adult safeguarding, resulting in recommendations about the importance of promoting the safeguarding message to all sectors of the community and Member involvement in the audit of case files.

2.6 The Work Programme has covered a number of other issues, including:

- Two joint meetings were held with Healthy Communities Scrutiny Committee to give consideration to Phases 1 and 2 of the Shropshire Council's budget for 2012/13.
- The outcomes of the review into Integrated Offender Management were considered and Members acknowledged the further work which was being done on governance arrangements and on developing the business plan.
- Scrutiny of the commissioning of community leisure facilities continued and Members also had an early opportunity to comment on the draft Play Strategy.
- Developments in education were an important theme. The Committee was kept informed of the development of academies and free schools, both nationally and in Shropshire, and the development of school collaborations and federations within the county. It was agreed that the implications for Shropshire Council of the changing education landscape would continue to be monitored by the Committee.
- The Committee looked at post-16 education and training provision and recognised the challenge for the local authority of being held to account for the quality of further education provision, yet having limited powers to intervene.
- Dr Ghani, Public Health Lead at Shropshire County Primary Care Trust, presented a report on the Shropshire Accident Prevention Strategy for Children and Young People.
- The recommendations of the 0-25 years Disability Services Task and Finish Group were endorsed by Cabinet in October 2011. Members welcomed the progress which had been made at their July 2012 meeting and noted the next phase of development would focus on the transition process for 14-25 year olds.
- A joint Task and Finish Group on GHB/Synthetic Drug Misuse was set up with Healthy Communities Scrutiny Committee which reported to Cabinet in July 2012 with a number of wide-ranging recommendations.

3.0 What are we currently doing?

- 3.1 Safeguarding continues to be a key theme and Sally Halls, Chairman of Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board, will be attending the next meeting of the Committee in October.
- 3.2 A joint Task and Finish Group on transport was set up in March 2012, with membership from three Scrutiny Committees (Safe and Confident Communities, Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny and Protecting and Enhancing our Environment).
- 3.3 Members of the Committee are also represented on the joint Task and Finish Group on Youth Unemployment, together with Members from Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee and several co-opted members with education and business experience.
- 3.4 Narrowing the Gap Task and Finish Group has been meeting regularly since April, considering ways of reducing the gap in educational attainment between disadvantaged pupils, such as those on free school meals, and their peers. This group has been fortunate to benefit from the expertise of several co-opted members, including head teachers, and will present its findings to Scrutiny and Cabinet in the autumn.

4.0 What are our future plans?

- 4.1 The recent Safeguarding Peer Review team had some concerns that the structure of the scrutiny function may impede a clear focus on children's services and made a recommendation that the scrutiny function should also include performance of external organisations as it affects safeguarding. In response to this, there will be some themed sessions looking at children's safeguarding in the interim with the Chair of the Children's Safeguarding Board attending Scrutiny twice yearly.
- 4.2 The outcomes of the Corporate Peer Review (July 2012) and Adult Social Care Peer Review (September 2012) may also affect the future role of this Committee.
- 4.3 A new scrutiny process is to be drawn up, as a result of the development of new strategic commissioning bodies for key public services in Shropshire and a more diverse local market place of providers from all sectors.
- 4.4 The Work Programme for the Committee is kept under review by the Scrutiny Chairs' Group and will evolve to take account of the findings of the Peer Reviews and the significant changes facing the Council in the future.