



<u>Committee and Date</u> Young People's Scrutiny Committee 17 December 2013 10:00	<u>Item No</u> 3 Public
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Minutes of the Young People's Scrutiny Committee (formerly Safe and Confident Communities Scrutiny Committee) meeting held on Thursday 28 November 2013

10:00 – 12:00 noon

Responsible Officer Anne Cousins

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Present

Mrs J Barrow (Chairman); Mr P Cherrington; Mrs H Fraser; Mrs H Kidd; Mr R Macey; Mrs P Mullock (Vice Chairman); Mr K Pardy and Mr D Turner.

Co-opted Members

Mr A Atkinson Roman Catholic Diocese
Mr M Hignett Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly
Dr D Wilson Parent/Governor, Secondary Schools

Present for agenda item 14

Sally Halls, Independent Chair, Shropshire's Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB)
Rod Thomson, Director of Public Health/Vice Chairman of the Board
Alison Davies, West Mercia Police (substituting for Amanda Blakeman)
Linda Izquierdo, Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) (substituting for Dr Caron Morton)
Cllr Mrs Ann Hartley, Portfolio Holder – Children's Services, Shropshire Council
Cllr Mrs Karen Calder, Portfolio Holder – Health, Shropshire Council
Cllr Nick Bardsley, Deputy Portfolio Holder – Children's Services, Shropshire Council

Apologies from: Cllr Keith Barrow, Leader, Shropshire Council; Clive Wright, Chief Executive, Shropshire Council; Audrey Scott-Riley, Designated Lead Nurse.

9. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

9.1 Apologies were received from Mr Robert Tindall, Mr Kevin Turley and Mr Paul Wynn. Mr Peter Cherrington substituted for Mr Wynn.

10. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

11. Minutes

- 11.1 In response to a question from the Chairman relating to paragraph 6.11 of the minutes, the Director of Children's Services confirmed the relationship between local authorities and academies was a national issue. Greater clarity for local authorities could only happen if new legislation was passed, which had not yet happened.
- 11.2 The Chairman referred to the recommendations at paragraph 6.17B and suggested scrutinising the numbers and costs of looked after children should be added to the Work Programme. She went on to say that, with the recent publication of the draft Business Plan, it was likely there would be changes to the Work Programme.
- 11.3 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the last meeting, held on 17 July 2013, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

13. Members' Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

14. Shropshire's Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

- 14.1 Sally Halls, Independent Chair of Shropshire's Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) presented her Annual Report (copy of both report and presentation attached to signed minutes).
- 14.2 The Independent Chair explained the Annual Report provided an assessment of the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements during the last twelve months, identified challenges to be addressed and set out priorities for the coming year. She reported the Ofsted inspection in 2012 of local authority arrangements for the protection of children had rated overall effectiveness as "adequate". A new Ofsted inspection regime, coming into effect later in November 2013, meant there would be a single inspection of all children's services and there was no longer a category of "adequate". This significantly raised the bar for local authorities. At the same time, there was heightened awareness of child protection issues nationally, with a number of high-profile cases from across the country being extensively reported in the media.
- 14.3 The Independent Chair reported on progress on the three priorities of the SSCB, which were compromised parenting, children who go missing (including child sexual exploitation and trafficking) and communication.

- 14.3 Moving on to discuss challenges, the Independent Chair referred to the budget position facing Shropshire Council and asked Members to assure themselves when making decisions that there were no unforeseen consequences for the safety of children. If there were, she suggested the financial consequences would be far more expensive.
- 14.4 The challenges facing all partners included ensuring adults received adequate help because a number of compromised parents received services from a range of agencies. Services such as mental health, drug support and adult social care were critical to ensure the safeguarding of children. There were also particular challenges for partners because of the high number of vulnerable children placed in Shropshire by other local authorities. Care leavers were another group of vulnerable young people. The Independent Chair emphasised the need for agencies to be able to demonstrate that they sought the views of young people and listened to their experiences.
- 14.5 For the future, the Independent Chair stated the current priorities would continue and would be reviewed early in 2014.
- 14.6 In answer to a question about having sufficient oversight of the service redesign proposals at Shropshire Council, the Independent Chair said she would be happy to offer the Council an independent, informed view of proposals affecting safeguarding. On an operational level, important factors were the regular case file reviews and multi-agency audits and the maintenance of a risk register.
- 14.7 There was discussion about the need to communicate with children, including those who found this difficult, e.g. those with English as their second language, and the need to recognise when the silence of children might be significant. Members were reassured children's social workers were well aware of these issues and audits showed evidence of how children's views were recorded.
- 14.8 Members suggested stability in the adult social care workforce, as well as in children's services, was required. The Independent Chair commented on the vulnerability of care leavers over the age of 18 and suggested corporate parents needed to understand what was happening with this group of young people.
- 14.9 There was a request to see detailed risk assessments as part of the budget process. Karen Bradshaw, Director of Children's Services, assured Members this would be done.
- 14.10 In response to a question about emotional abuse of children, Kevin Peers, Interim Head of Safeguarding, assured Members that robust multi-agency arrangements were in place to identify and deal with children's concerns, including working closely with schools and children's centres.
- 14.11 There was discussion about how the SSCB held all the different agencies to account. Rod Thomson, Director of Public Health and Vice Chairman of the

Board, commented that the appointment of Sally Halls to the post of Independent Chair of the Board had provided a degree of rigour to the Board's work and enabled the Board to deal with issues at an early stage. Without this independence, there could be a danger of one agency criticising another.

- 14.12 The Independent Chair expanded on this by explaining all Board Members had a dual role, as a Board Member and as a representative of their particular organisation. It was the responsibility of each Member to bring issues to the attention of the Board. Linda Izquierdo, of the CCG, and Alison Davies, West Mercia Police, both agreed and were able to provide examples of how this had worked in practice.
- 14.13 Members noted the agency attendance figures for the quarterly Board meetings (page 13 of the report refers). The Independent Chair explained these figures were published in order for agencies to be able to hold their representatives to account. There was a particular need to engage GPs in the work of the SSCB.
- 14.14 It was confirmed that all actions arising from the last Ofsted report had been completed. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services reported that Shropshire had recently taken part in a thematic review looking at children placed outside their home county. The results of this were very positive, with Shropshire being cited as a good practice example in the report. She explained Shropshire had a very small number of looked after children who were placed outside the county.
- 14.15 The Independent Chair referred to the high number of looked after children placed in Shropshire by other local authorities. Two of those children had taken their own lives, resulting in serious case reviews. She suggested Members may wish to consider the findings of those two reviews.
- 14.16 In response to a question about tangible improvements arising from the last Ofsted report, the Independent Chair said she was expecting to give an account in the next report. She went on to say that the Council had a role in ensuring the effectiveness of the Board and that a process of performance management of herself as Chair had been agreed. She suggested the results of this could be reported to the Committee.

14.17 The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion.

15. Children's Health

- 15.1 Rod Thomson, Director of Public Health, Emma Sandbach, Intelligence Specialist, Public Health, and Cathy Levy, Public Health Programme Lead – Obesity, gave two presentations to the Committee (copies attached to signed minutes). The first provided an overview of child health statistics and the second described how childhood obesity in Shropshire was being tackled.
- 15.2 The first presentation informed Members that there were four areas of particular concern in Shropshire: physical activity (Shropshire below average);

smoking in pregnancy (Shropshire above average); breastfeeding (Shropshire below average) and numbers of young people admitted to hospital as a result of self-harm (Shropshire above average).

- 15.3 The second presentation provided data on childhood obesity in Shropshire and summarised the work being done to combat this.
- 15.4 The Chairman drew Members' attention to the Healthy Weight Partnership Event to be held on 26 November 2013 and encouraged them to attend. She then proposed setting up a Task and Finish Group on Childhood Obesity. This was agreed and the Chairman invited Members to put their names forward if they wished to take part.
- 15.5 Members sought and received clarification of points contained within the statistical information presented. One gap in the statistics which was identified was the difficulty of gathering data across the border between Shropshire and Wales. The Director of Public Health informed the Committee he was working with his counterpart in Powys on ways to improve data sharing.
- 15.16 **RESOLVED:** That a Task and Finish Group on Childhood Obesity be established.

16. Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan

- 16.1 The Chairman informed the Committee the Work Programme was likely to change as a result of the publication of the draft Business Plan.
- 16.2 It was confirmed the title of the third report to be brought to the 17 December meeting should read "Self-assessment and Readiness for Inspection."
- 16.3 **RESOLVED:** That, subject to paragraph 16.2 above, the Work Programme be agreed.

Signed.....**Chairman**

Date.....