



## **YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2015**

**10.00 - 11.45 am in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND**

**Responsible Officer:** Tim Ward

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### **Present**

#### Shropshire Councillors

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)

Councillors Peggy Mullock (Vice Chairman), Hannah Fraser, Vince Hunt, Nic Laurens, Kevin Pardy, John Price, Robert Tindall and Kevin Turley

#### Co-Opted Members (Voting)

Austin Atkinson

## **59 Apologies and Substitutions**

59.1 Apologies for Absence were received from Mr Mark Hignett

## **60 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

60.1 There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

## **61 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

61.1 The minutes of the meetings held on the 4 November 2015 and 16 November 2015 had been circulated

### **61.2 RESOLVED: -**

That the minutes of the meetings held on the 4 November 2015 and 16 November 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record

## **62 Public Question Time**

62.1 There were no questions from members of the public.

## **63 Members' Question Time**

63.1 There were no questions from Members.

## **64 The Contribution of Schools to the Early Help and Child Protection Services**

- 64.1 Members received the report of the Commissioning Service Manager Early Help and Front Door Services which outlined the duties of the Local Authority and Schools on promoting the welfare of children and safeguarding them.
- 64.2 The Service Manager informed Members that it was important that Council Officers and schools worked together and outlined the work that was being done through training and networking opportunities.
- 64.3 Mrs Burke, Headteacher – Meole Brace School informed Members that the School considered that the emotional and mental wellbeing of pupils was important to the overall performance of the school. She outlined the services available to pupils which included a dedicated Student Support Team and also commissioned services from outside organisations. She added that the Student Support Team were situated in a standalone building within the school campus.
- 64.4 Mrs Altinok, Student Welfare Officer - Meole Brace School informed Members that students were identified in a number of ways, self-referral, referral by year tutor or other teacher, and by parents expressing concerns; the work was tailored to an individual students needs. She added that the Student Welfare Team worked with parents as well as pupils through awareness evenings and other programmes of work.
- 64.5 In response to a query, Mrs Burke confirmed that the School received no extra funding for the work and that the cost came out of the core school budget.
- 64.6 A Member commented that there was a lot of good work being carried out and asked how this was shared with other schools. The Commissioner for Education Improvement and Efficiency advised that information and best practise were shared through the Secondary Heads' briefings and a number of other forums.
- 64.7 Members who had visited the School in the autumn confirmed that they had been very impressed with all the work that was being done.
- 64.8 The Director of Children's Services commented that the crucial role that was played by schools in the early identification of potential problems and referral to early help was well recognised. She added that the work done by Meole Brace School was recognised as best practise and the standard that it was hoped that all schools would achieve.
- 64.9 The Chairman thanked the Commissioning Service Manager Early Help and Front Door Services for her report and Mrs Burke and Mrs Altinok for attending the meeting and congratulated them on the work that was being done at their school.
- 64.10 **RESOLVED:**

That the details contained in the report be noted

## 65 Post 16 Provision & funding in schools with 6th Form provision and colleges

- 65.1 Members received the report of the Post 16/Lifelong Learning Manager which highlighted the context and issues for post 16 provision in Shropshire.
- 65.2 The Post 16/Lifelong Learning Manager advised the meeting that there were considerable pressures for all local authority and other post 16 providers caused by the falling school population in Shropshire and a reduction in funding brought about by a change in the way funding was calculated. She informed Members that the government had launched a programme of post 16 area reviews, one of which covered Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Herefordshire and North Worcestershire. This would primarily look at the FE and sixth form college sector but would also consider the wider post 16 provision in an area, and the reviews would seek to ensure that the needs of local learners and employers were being met, that the right balance of provision was being provided, and sustainable institutions were created.
- 65.3 Mr Wain, Principal Shrewsbury College stated that as well as a reduction in funding there were additional pressures caused by the nature of the County. He advised that these pressures had led to the decision to merge Shrewsbury College with Shrewsbury Sixth Form College and New College Telford to form a new college structure which would allow each college to continue to maintain the quality of education provided.
- 65.4 Mr Ward, Principal Shrewsbury Sixth Form College, commented that there was pressure to change the curriculum offered in order to offer high quality apprenticeships and more vocational courses. He informed Members that currently the college received funding of £4560 per student but that this was to be reduced to £3950 for the next financial year which would result in a large reduction in his budget.
- 65.5 The Chairman commented that currently the budget for post 16 education was not ring-fenced unlike the other education funding and asked whether the Council could make representations to government to urge them to do this. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services agreed to take this forward.
- 65.6 Several Members commented that students often had a long distance to travel and that the cost of this was prohibitive. They asked what work was being done to reduce the costs to students. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services commented that a lot of innovative work was being done around school transport in an effort to reduce costs.
- 65.7 The Chairman thanked Mr Wain and Mr Ward for attending the meeting.
- 65.8 **RESOLVED:**
- a) That the contents of the report be noted
  - b) That the process for the post 16 area review across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Herefordshire and North Worcestershire be noted.

- c) That the Leader of Shropshire Council be asked to lobby Shropshire MPs regarding the ring fencing of post 16 education funding.

## **66 The Rate of Referrals and Re-Referrals to Children's Social Care**

- 66.1 Members received the report of the Head of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding which set out the work done by Shropshire's Children's Social Work in the management of referrals and repeat Child Protection Plans over the past 18 months.
- 66.2 The Head of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding advised Members that the number and rates of referrals in Shropshire remained lower than that of statistical neighbours but urged caution in this comparison as recording across all authorities was not consistent. She informed Members that the number of referrals into children's social work had decreased year on year following changes to the process for identifying and managing referrals. She added that the provision of a "professional conversation" through the initial contact process gave professionals and parents a direct contact with a range of specialist professionals able to share information and advise on how to provide support through early help as a first response where safe to do so. Members noted that those initial contacts which met the threshold for referral were passed for review directly to the Senior Social Work Team in Compass.
- 66.3 The Head of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding advised Members that the number of children subject to a second Child Protection Plan (CPP) had reduced year on year. She informed Members that a multi-agency audit had been carried out and this had concluded the threshold for decision making on the first and second occasion's had been correct as had decisions made to remove child from a Plan.
- 66.4 A Member queried the decision making process when a child was removed from a CPP. The Head of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding advised that all decisions were made at a multi-agency conference, where ongoing needs were assessed and a lead professional was identified to continue working with the family and ensure ongoing support.
- 66.5 The Chairman congratulated the Head of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding and her team on the work that was being carried out.
- 66.6 RESOLVED:
  - a) That the content of the report be noted
  - b) That Members are assured that the quality of service, audit activity and systems and processes were in place to ensure children were safeguarded and their welfare promoted.

## **67 Work Programme**

- 67.1 Members received copies of the Committee's Work Programme and the Cabinet Forward Plan.

67.2 The Chairman commented that she had received an email from a member of the public regarding the Shropshire's Visitors' Code of Conduct Policy - to schools and had asked that it be forwarded to Members. She asked Members to consider the contents of the email and whether they would wish to add an item to the Work Programme. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services suggested that Members may wish to look at the wider Safer Schools Policy.

67.3 The Chairman asked Members to let her know of any other topics they would like added to the Committee's Work Programme.

## 68 **Date of Next Meeting**

68.1 Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 3 February 2016 at 10.00am at Shirehall.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....