



YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2016

10.00 - 11.32 am in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257713

Present

Shropshire Councillors

Councillors Peggy Mullock (Vice Chairman), Andy Boddington, Vince Hunt, Nic Laurens, John Price, Kevin Turley and Roger Evans (Substitute) (substitute for Hannah Fraser)

16 Apologies and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joyce Barrow, Hannah Fraser (Substitute: Roger Evans), Kevin Parry and Robert Tindall.

Apologies for absence were also received from Sue Hudson representing the Diocese of Shrewsbury (RC).

17 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

Councillor Kevin Turley declared that he was the Vice Chairman of Shifnal Swimming Pool Committee.

18 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

19 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

20 Members' Question Time

Councillor Roger Evans asked the following question and the written response was tabled.

“In 2014 the then Cabinet Member decided to implement a policy of charging for issuing travel passes to post 16 students. These to be used for travelling to college and sixth forms. The Cabinet Member at that time decided to delegate this to the appropriate Director with the expectation that increases would be applied yearly from that September for 3 years. The last of these is due to commence this coming September.

For those students who are on defined benefits the increase means that the travel pass will now cost £142.50 per academic year. For students not on defined benefits the cost will be increased to £875.00. This is a huge amount of money for parents living in rural areas, areas where walking to the appropriate education establishment is too far and is unsafe.

The corresponding amount charged from September 2015 was £105.00 and £766.00. Those students on defined benefit therefore will have an increase of over 35%. Those whose parents earn in excess of the £16,190 threshold will have an increase of 14% imposed on them, is this fair?

According to information supplied by officers the total number of students using the service is reducing. 915 students applied for a pass in September 2014. This had fallen to 432 in February 2016. This is partly due to bus operators marketing their own bus passes which are more cost effective to the student and offer greater enhancements.

Can the present Cabinet Member inform us whether he supports this policy or will he revisit it and look to see if a better value option can be made available.”

Response:

The Post/16 transport contribution scheme for those Post/16 students entitled to transport assistance commenced in September 1995. It is perhaps helpful to note that Post/16 transport is a discretionary area and this policy is supported by the Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Highways and Transport Services. At the same time it does need to address the disparity between the cost of Post/16 travel and the contributions received towards this.

Following formal consultation in 2014, it was agreed to adjust the Post/16 contribution levels (over a 3 year period) from £550 to £875 and from £30 to £142.50 for those families in receipt of defined benefits, with the upcoming 2016/17 academic year being the final year of this. The 2016/17 contribution level compared to that in 2015/16 represents 11 pence per journey for those students on defined benefits and 30 pence per journey for others.

There are currently 395 entitled students accessing this scheme, of which 125 pay the full contribution and 270 who pay the reduced level though their entitlement to benefits. The reduction in numbers accessing the Council's scheme is mainly through students going to bus operators to purchase tickets directly, such as the 24/7 bus pass offered by Arriva at its current cost of £485 pa.

Category	Current Income Levels	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Post-16 full contribution	£550	£658	£766	£875
Post-16 Low Income	£30	£67.50	£105	£142.50

In a supplementary question, Councillor Roger Evans commented that Shropshire Council was charging over £800 for a bus pass compared to Arriva who were charging just over £400 and which represented greater value for money. He questioned if Shropshire Council could make better use of this and also asked if there was anything more that could be done for those students with no access to Arriva buses.

In response the Director of Children's Services explained that Post/16 transport was a discretionary area and did not have to be supported in quite the same way as for statutory school age children. Officers in Integrated Transport had worked extremely hard with Arriva and other operators to secure a reduced season ticket cost. However, this was only available to those children where there was a commercial route available.

Shropshire Council was making savings and these savings represented a reduction compared to what we would be paying if the packages were not in place and we were having to pay commercial prices.

Shropshire Council's provision post 16 contribution scheme did compare favourably with other authorities.

In conclusion, she commented that although Councillor David Minnery was not the Portfolio Holder at the time the policy had been agreed and implemented, he was very supportive of it and at this point in time did not propose to put it forward for review.

A Member questioned what months the figures covered and questioned whether the figures would change if based upon the academic year or financial year.

AGREED: That a written response to Councillor Roger Evans's supplementary question be provided.

21 Corporate Parenting

The Head of Quality Performance and Assurance was in attendance and presented the report which included the recent assurance report to Shropshire's Safeguarding

Children's Board in March 2016 and set out the arrangements put in place by Children's Services to ensure that those young people for whom we have Corporate Parenting responsibility for are safeguarded.

Following a suggestion by a Member and with regard to paragraph 1.3(A) of the Shropshire Corporate Parenting Strategy 2016-18, the Head of Quality Performance and Assurance indicated that they were constantly exploring ways to engage with our partners and children to get an idea on what they were thinking and also to understand their experiences and needs. During the ensuing debate and following a suggestion that Members could attend a Corporate Parenting Panel as an observer, it became apparent that the newer elected Members might not have signed up to be a Corporate Parent. It was agreed that following the meeting Councillor Peggy Mullock would send an email to all Members urging them to commit to the Corporate Parenting Pledge.

(NB: Following the meeting and further investigation it was established that the Corporate Parenting Pledge was currently undergoing a review. Following this review the intention was to relaunch and seek commitment from all Members. It was anticipated that this would take place before the end of this calendar year. Following the meeting an email was sent to all Members of this Committee informing them of this review.)

In response to questions from Members, Officers explained that employability opportunities for Looked After Children (LAC) were good and Shropshire Council actively encouraged care leavers to go on to undertake apprenticeships, work experience and work placements. Data relating to the numbers of LAC, young people and care leavers etc was circulated and made available to the Corporate Parenting Panel and this could be sent to all Councillors if required. LAC would not normally contribute to a review report. In response to comments that 12 LAC had not received a visit within the permitted timescale, the Head of Quality Performance and Assurance explained that all timescales were continually monitored, it would be rare to achieve 100% visits for many reasons, some children did not want to be seen as a LAC, and there would always be a number of LAC who could not cope with arrangements. Structural issues in Children's Services had now been resolved and all children had been allocated a Social Worker.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

All Officers were thanked for an excellent in-depth factual report.

22 **Children's Safeguarding Peer Review**

The Director of Children's Services was in attendance and presented the report which provided a further update on the actions being taken following the Children's Safeguarding Peer Review undertaken by the Local Government Association in 2015.

During the ensuing debate, Members noted that the frequency and number of Adoption Panels had not reduced but an increase in the number of children had led to longer days for Adoption Panel members. In response to concerns raised

regarding the safety of young people when using Apps, Members noted that cyber activity and the impact on a young person's safety was an area of work undertaken and considered by the Shropshire Safeguarding Children's Board.

RESOLVED: That:

- (i) The report and Action Plans as set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 be noted; and
- (ii) An update on the financial implications of implementing any actions arising from the Children's Safeguarding Peer Review be presented to a future meeting of this Committee for consideration.

23 Schools Organisation

The meeting received a presentation from the Service Manager for Education Improvement & Efficiency (copy attached to the signed minutes) which provided an overview of the Area Meetings undertaken with Head Teachers and Governors and outlined the next steps for Head Teachers, Governors and Shropshire Council.

During the ensuing debate, Members noted that regular meetings and dialogue with both the Shrewsbury and Herefordshire dioceses had been undertaken and would continue, and both dioceses had expressed their agreement to the prospect of mixed Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). At this point in time, it was not clear how many MATs there would be in Shropshire.

24 How Shropshire Council will meet the statutory requirements for the provision of swimming

The meeting received a verbal report from the Leisure Services Manager. He advised that local authorities were not duty bound to provide swimming pools – this, along with leisure services, was a discretionary service. The national curriculum for Key Stage 2 children, aged 7-11, required pupils to be taught to:

- Swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres;
- Use a range of strokes effectively; and
- Perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.

The national curriculum is mandatory for all schools that are maintained by local authorities but not for academies and free schools although the majority did follow the national curriculum. Head Teachers and Governors are responsible for the curriculum of their respective schools and should ensure that it meets the needs of pupils and the requirements of the national curriculum where they apply. Shropshire currently had 133 LA maintained schools, 106 of which had been identified as using the swimming pool facilities that Shropshire Council was associated with.

A key factor for the future provision of swimming was the possibility of reduced funding for leisure facilities due to the financial situation that Shropshire Council currently faced. Shropshire Council was currently:

- Working with existing operators and looking at future provision based on reduced funding – management fee and joint-use funding;
- Undertaking discussions with Town & Parish Councils to see where they could support facilities in the future;
- Working with proactive local groups – discussing operational options, fund raising, etc;
- Negotiating the transfer for operational responsibility of joint-use facilities to schools; and
- Undertaking a consultation exercise on a Draft Leisure Facilities Strategy (2016-2037) (a document based on Sport England guidance, countywide demographics, affordability & sustainability, supply & demand). The consultation exercise would take place over a period of two months culminating on the 30 September 2016. Any future options/decisions would hinge on the results of this consultation.

In response to concerns regarding the deadline date and given that schools would be closed during August with the possibility of there being limited staff available to comment, the Leisure Services Manager indicated that towards the end of the consultation period he would endeavour to contact any relevant schools that had not commented.

AGREED: that, following this meeting, a briefing note outlining the main points of this item be circulated to Members of this Committee.

25 **Work Programme**

Members received and noted the Committee's Work Programme and the Cabinet Forward Plan.

It was agreed that the following items be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

- SATS results and to include any identified pressures on the emotional health and wellbeing of the children taking them; and
- Youth Facility Grant

26 **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that the next meeting of the Young People's Scrutiny Committee will be held at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 14 September 2016 in the Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND.

The Members of the Committee noted that Tina Russell, Head of Safeguarding, would soon be leaving Shropshire Council and they all thanked her for her help, hard work and commitment during her employment with this Authority and wished her well for the future.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: