



PEOPLE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2018

10.00 am - 12.00 pm in the Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

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Present

Shropshire Councillors

Councillor Peggy Mullock (Chairman)

Councillors Ed Potter (Vice-Chair), Christian Lea, Kevin Pardy, John Price and Kevin Turley

22 Apologies and Substitutions

22.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nigel Hartin, Elliot Lynch and Cecilia Motley and from Sian Lines (Diocese of Hereford)

23 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

23.1 There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

24 Minutes

24.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2017 had been circulated

24.2 With regard to minute 16.1 the Director of Children's Services clarified that although the report went out in her name it was the report of the Task and Finish Group.

25 Public Question Time

25.1 There were no questions from members of the public

26 Members' Question Time

26.1 There were no questions from Members

27 Ofsted Action Plan

27.1 The meeting received the report of the Director of Children's Services which set out the action plan required by Ofsted following the recent inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

27.2 The Director of Children's Services reminded Members that following the inspection carried out by Ofsted in September 2017 the Council was rated good overall, placing Shropshire amongst the highest performing local authorities nationally. She

advised the meeting that the report provided by Ofsted contained a number of recommendations for improvement, and that the Council was required to provide Ofsted with an Action Plan which set out the Council's responses to the recommendations.

- 27.3 The Chair congratulated Officers on the clear and concise way that the Action Plan was laid out.
- 27.4 A Member asked what input staff had had in developing the Action Plan. The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding informed the meeting that following the inspection a Staff Development Day had been held which had focussed on the inspection and that there had been continuous consultation with staff throughout the development of the Action Plan.
- 27.5 In response to a query, the Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding advised that progress with all areas of the Action Plan was on track.
- 27.6 A Member asked how progress with the actions would be monitored. The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding informed the meeting that a variety of audits were already carried out to ensure good practice and that a number of themed audits were planned to ensure that the changes were embedded in normal work practices.
- 27.7 The Director of Children's Services commented that the 5 priorities underpinned all the work that was carried out.
- 27.8 The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services commented that whilst the Ofsted result was excellent the Council could not sit on its laurels. He added that there was a role for Councillors in achieving some of the recommendations.
- 27.9 A Member asked how performance would be measured for those recommendations that had already been actioned. The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding advised that performance measurement was built into the processes. The Director of Children's Services said that she and the Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding held quarterly performance reviews with Service Managers.
- 27.10 In response to a query, the Director of Children's Services commented that it was important to have a Care Leavers Pledge which was robust and ensured that it laid out levels of support and help available to care leavers. She added that it was important that commitment was gained from wider partners in order to take this forward. She agreed that a report would be brought to a future meeting setting out progress with the development of the pledge.
- 27.11 With regard to recommendation 12 the Director of Children's Services commented that the only accommodation available for homeless young people was often "hard to let" properties that were unsuitable. She added that there was a role for Councillors as Corporate Parent in ensuring that the Council was able to provide suitable accommodation for homeless young people.

27.12 Members confirmed that the Action Plan adequately addressed the required improvements.

27.14 The Director of Children's Services advised the meeting that following minor amendments the Action Plan would be submitted to Ofsted by the required date of 7 March.

28 Ensuring sufficient placements for looked after children

28.1 The meeting received a presentation from the Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding (copy attached to the signed minutes) which provided the context for Shropshire's increasing looked after children numbers, for increases in placement costs and set out the increasing complexity of the needs of looked after children.

28.2 The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding informed the meeting that in the period between April 2017 and December 2017 the number of Looked After Children (LAC) had risen by 41, mainly due to the fact that less children had left the care of the Authority than previously, and that the profile of the children coming into care had changed in that the biggest cohort was aged 0 – 5 years where previously it had been 14 – 17 years.

28.3 The Director of Children's Services commented that whilst the number of LAC was rising the numbers were still similar or lower than those of the Councils statistical neighbours, and national figures.

28.4 The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding informed Members that there had been an increase in the complexity of our looked after children through 2017 due to

- An increase in younger children being at risk of significant harm requiring an increased number of applications to court
- An increase in complex court proceedings relating to older children
- Increased focus within court proceedings on placing children with family members resulting in high number of connected carers assessments per case
- An increase in complex emotional health and well-being and mental health issues
- An increase in drug misuse and involvement with drug dealers/drug running
- Increasing complexity with our older young people including trafficking, self-destructive behaviours and Child Sexual Exploitation

The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding highlighted the fact that the increasing complexity of cases caused pressure within a number of teams within the Council and also on external partners.

28.5 The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding highlighted the costs of various different placements and that it was important to ensure that there was a sufficiency of internal placements.

28.6 It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group be set up to look at Sufficiency of Placements and that terms of reference should be brought to the next meeting for approval.

29 Date of Next meeting

29.1 Members were reminded that the next meeting of the People Overview Committee would be held on Wednesday 14 March 2018 at 10.00am.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: