



## **Committee and Date**

People Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee

10<sup>th</sup> April 2024

## **PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2024**

**In the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury,  
Shropshire, SY2 6ND**

**10.00 am - 12.04 pm**

**Responsible Officer:** Shelley Davies

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### **Present:**

Councillors Roy Aldcroft, Jeff Anderson, Peter Broomhall, Nat Green, Duncan Kerr, Hilary Luff, Peggy Mullock (Chairman) , Kevin Pardy, Vivienne Parry, Claire Wild (Vice Chairman) and Heather Kidd (Substitute for Ruth Houghton)

### **23 Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Ruth Houghton (Substitute: Councillor Heather Kidd).

### **24 Disclosable Interests**

None were declared.

### **25 Minutes**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record and be signed by the Chairman.

### **26 Public Questions**

There were no public questions.

### **27 Member Question Time**

There were no members' questions.

### **28 Report of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Rural Proofing in Health and Care**

The Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chair of the Rural Proofing Task and Finish Group introduced the report, which set out the Group's key findings, conclusions and recommendations considering delivering health and care services to rural communities in Shropshire.

Geoff Elner, Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee gave thanks to all members and officers involved for their expertise to ensure the best outcome for residents. Particular thanks were given to Sophie Foster, Overview and Scrutiny Officer and Councillor Heather Kidd, Chair of the Rural Proofing Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Heather Kidd, Chair of the Task and Finish Group noted that their investigation had looked at the options to effectively 'rural proof' the provision of health and care in Shropshire and it was explained that the Group had made 14 recommendations to help address inequalities of service provision between rural and urban areas.

In response to queries from members it was confirmed that the report would be shared with Town & Parish Councils through the Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC) and it was envisaged that the Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit would also be used when reviewing existing services.

The Chairman thanked the Task and Finish Group for their work.

#### **RECOMMENDED:**

That the Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit be adopted by the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a part of their own overview and scrutiny processes to support them in maintaining a robust view on the needs of their local rural populations when reviewing strategies, initiatives and service delivery plans.

### **29 Ofsted Report - Focussed Visit to Shropshire's Children's Services**

Sonya Miller, Assistant Director Children's Social Care & Safeguarding presented the report in relation to the recent letter from OFSTED concerning a focused visit in November 2023.

Members were made aware of the challenges that had led to the findings of the Inspectors and were informed that an Improvement Plan had been drafted to address the issues and an Improvement Board set up to oversee progress. The draft Improvement Plan was shared with members, and it was noted that once finalised it would be presented to Cabinet for approval.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- Legal advice had been sought in relation to the Governance of the Improvement Board and a report would be presented to Council in respect of this matter.
- The Improvement Board had been voluntarily set up by the Council and not directed by OFSTED.

- It was felt that the Board would need to address internal issues in first instance and then look at the possibility of including external representation.
- The Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership would have a role to play in the Improvement Plan.
- The Business Support transformation project was a key part of the improvement journey which would ensure Social Workers were able to use their time more effectively.
- The language used in correspondence to parents had been looked at to ensure it was legal but understood by parents.
- The ideal caseload for a Social Worker was 15 – 18 children but this was currently at 30 plus which was too high and impacted on the quality of practice.
- The Team was working with IT to use new technology to effectively undertake key tasks.
- It was important to reduce the number of Agency Staff not just for financial reasons but also because it was more beneficial for children to have a permanent Social Worker.
- The establishments of Hubs would reduce the amount of travel time for Social Workers.
- The increase of Looked After Children in Shropshire was a complex issue involving a number of factors.

### **RECOMMENDED:**

That the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee support the establishment of the Hubs and recommend to Cabinet that:

- The Transforming Business Support project be prioritised and given a specific timeline.
- The Chairman of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to sit on the Improvement Board.
- Adequate resources be given to ensure an effective recruitment campaign for Social Workers.

**30 Work Programme**

The work programme had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Sophie Foster, Overview & Scrutiny Officer explained that the reporting cycle for the performance monitoring focus which was a standing item on each agenda had not aligned with the meeting today and therefore an additional meeting would be scheduled in March for this item.

Members were advised that meetings for the 2024/25 work programme had been scheduled and any outstanding topics from the current work programme would be automatically transferred across.

**31 Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Meeting will be taking place at 10.00 am on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....