



Date: Wednesday, 16 September 2020

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: THIS IS A VIRTUAL MEETING - PLEASE USE THE LINK ON THE AGENDA TO LISTEN TO THE MEETING

Contact: Julie Fildes, Committee Officer  
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## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)

#### **3 Minutes of the meeting held on 10th June, 8th July and 29th July 2020 (Pages 1 - 22)**

To consider the Minutes of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 8<sup>th</sup> July and 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

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## SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

### PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2020**  
**11.00 am - 1.40 pm Virtual Meeting**

**Responsible Officer:** Julie Fildes  
Email: julie.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257723

#### **Present**

Councillor Claire Wild (Chair)  
Councillors Joyce Barrow, Karen Calder, Roger Evans, Hannah Fraser, Cecilia Motley,  
Peggy Mullock and Leslie Winwood

#### **68 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Councillors Alan Mosley and Dave Tremellen.  
Councillor Pauline Dee attended as substitute for Councillor Dave Tremellen.

#### **69 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None were declared.

#### **70 Minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2020**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **71 Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

#### **72 Member Question Time**

The Chair advised that six Member questions had been received. A copy of the report containing the detailed questions and their formal response is attached to the signed minutes. The Chair agreed that the question [4] submitted by Councillor Heather Kidd could be read by Councillor Ruth Houghton on her behalf and as Councillor Houghton was cognisant of Councillor Kidd's views on the topic she would allow her to submit a supplementary question on Councillor Kidd's behalf.

- i) Received from Councillor Ruth Houghton in relation to the Care Sector. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Houghton asked how the Council monitored the payment rate the Carers received. The Acting Interim Chief Executive, Andy Begley, agreed to provide a detailed response outside of the meeting which would be circulated to all Members of the Committee. He confirmed that the Council worked with providers through Shropshire Partners in Care to understand current payments to frontline staff.

- ii) Received from Councillor David Vasmer in relation to Climate Change. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Vasmer asked if the documents referred to in the response could be published for the Performance Management Committee that would consider Climate Change. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Services and Climate Change responded that recent issues had delayed the publication of papers due to the redeployment of staff to critical functions. Whilst the work on the strategy had been delayed, the work on the projects to reduce carbon emissions had proceeded.
- iii) Received from Councillor Viv Parry in relation to the mowing of grass verges. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Parry requested that priority be given to the management of verges in the towns.
- iv) Received from Councillor Heather Kidd and asked by Councillor Ruth Houghton on the effect of Covid-19 on care homes. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Houghton asked whether more detailed information could be given on the outcomes for the under 65 age group with learning difficulties. The Acting Interim Chief Executive, Andy Begley responded that there was ongoing work with the ESP partnership on assessing the outcome of Covid-19 infection for this age group, but the Council could only provide information on those people from this group who were in receipt of council services. More specific reporting was done through the CQC and national reporting.
- v) Received from Councillor Roger Evans on the recovery plan. By way of a supplementary question Councillor asked why all opposition Councillors were being excluded from the two task groups which had been established when all other authorities were working cross party in response to the Covid-19 crisis. The Chair advised that this needed to be taken up with the Leader of Council. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Services and Climate Change advised that a cross party oversight and governance committee was in the process of being established.
- vi) Received from Councillor Roger Evans on the local outbreak control plan. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Evans asked that the cross party oversight and governance committee include cross party members.

### 73 **Schools Operation during the Covid-19 Pandemic** (Pages 45 - 110)

The Acting Interim Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, Karen Bradshaw introduced the presentation. [Copy attached to the signed minutes.]

The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor advised Members of attendance at schools from the start of the Covid-19 until the end of May which showed that a greater percentage of children in Shropshire continued to attend school than the national average. Members noted that the numbers of vulnerable children attending schools have significantly increased over this time. Members noted that since the wider reopening on 1<sup>st</sup> June of schools there has been a phased reopening of schools and numbers attending schools has risen gradually, with attendance rates in line with national figures.

The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor outlined the ways that communication with schools had been maintained during the lock down period, with schools being supported and challenged. A parent helpline had also been established to ensure that school places were provided for the children of key workers and vulnerable children, this included early year settings. Schools were asked to assess the needs of their vulnerable children to ensure they were in the most suitable setting through a RAG rating template.

Members heard that the Local Authority had requested maintained schools to carry out a risk assessment in preparation for the wider reopening. Despite tight deadlines all schools completed the assessments by the deadline and no reopenings were delayed due to incomplete risk assessments.

The Service Manager for Learning and Skills, Children's Services reported on home to school transport. School transport had continued throughout the lock down period and usage rates mirrored the school attendance rates. National guidance is detailed in regard to social distancing and has impacted on the number of children who can be carried and how this is done, with carriers operating at 25% capacity, which will not be manageable once schools fully reopen if restrictions are still in place. Provisions were put into place to support and conserve the supplier network through paying 'Supplier Relief' until the end of June and possibly extended to the end of October.

Members noted that schools had been notified that their core funding for the next year was fully protected so that all regular financial commitments would be met. It had been acknowledged that schools had incurred additional costs as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In April, Government guidance had been issued which outlined the additional costs that could be reclaimed up to a certain funding limit based on a banding scheme according to the size of the school. Other costs not included in the initial guidance had been identified and it was hoped that the Government would produce further guidance on how these costs would be recognised and met, such as provision of PPE. Loss of private income was also of concern. As the employer for maintained schools the Council was responsible for furloughing staff who were paid directly from private income. Only one application could be made to Government by a single employer and this had delayed the application. Academies were outside of the Local Authority control and were the employer of staff in their schools.

The Interim Acting Chief Executive advised Members that the Council had taken a whole Children and Young People's Directorate approach to supporting children and families. Early Help had provided services where other agencies had withdrawn due to Covid-19. Children with special educational needs had experienced a particular challenging time. Numbers of assessment requests were lower than would be expected and further work around this was required. There was concern regarding fewer multidisciplinary assessments being requested and alternative ways of providing these assessments were being explored. Ofsted had been keen to support the Local Authority through this period and an inspector had been assigned who was working with children with an EHCP.

Members noted that the education access service [EAS] continued to work with children out of school to get them back into the education system. Safe guarding drop in sessions had received positive feedback. Children with a social worker had been risk assessed to ascertain whether they be better placed in school or remain in their care environment. Many of these children had been seen to thrive in their care settings. Social work visits had continued throughout the lockdown and foster parents had received additional support.

The Interim Acting Chief Executive, Karen Bradshaw, advised Members that the numbers of referrals to Compass had dropped significantly and this was reflected in all local authority areas which flagged concerns for the future.

The Principal Schools Improvement Adviser advised members that work had been undertaken to get looked after children back into schools to avoid a breakdown of placements in homes. This had been done through the virtual school. The provision of laptops for vulnerable children through a Government schemes has assisted in supporting these learners. The protected positive learning environment for many in this group had allowed them to consolidate their learning without the distractions of the school environment. School attendance figures for these children had shown a rapid increase early in May.

Members heard that the Department of Education [DfE] guidance for home learning had a high degree of interpretation and localised decision making. The need for greater clarity had been raised with the DfE particularly for the situation from September onwards, with more children returning to the school setting the provision of home learning would become more challenging for schools. Members noted that the communication with schools outlined the expectations of the blended curriculum, where different provision types were available. Training had been provided by the IT department on on-line learning platforms and on-line learning resources.

The Principal Schools Improvement Adviser expounded on the long-term effects of the pandemic and that support would continue to be provided for some time. During the transition period the focus would move from childcare provision to education and the re-establishment of school routines. The limitations of school buildings and transport to provide social distancing were being assessed to enable all children to return to school. Increased anxiety for children returning to school was anticipated and support for these children was being put in place to reduce future exclusions. Schools also needed support to undertake Tier 2 work.

The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor explained that school buildings had physical limitations due to their size and were being challenged by the number of places requested whilst social distancing. Schools had set up bubbles to reduce contact between groups of children. It was anticipated that numbers attending school would increase as parents returned to work and this would increase difficulties. Positive feedback had been received with children returning to school.

The Director of Children's Services extended her thanks and appreciation to the head teachers and school staff for their quick response to the crisis and the dedication they had shown.

In response to a Member's question on the provision of additional transport when schools fully reopened, the Service Manager for Learning and Skills, Children's Services said that planning was critical for September, engagement with schools was underway, strategies were being developed with transport demand dependent on how schools reopened. Where transport was not available the full re-openings of a minority of schools may have to be managed beyond September. Additional costs due to the current restrictions were of concern.

The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor replied to a Member's question on the challenges of schools returning to normal, identifying that in the short term a significant challenge was to safely provide all the places requested. This was being done through the establishment of bubbles with children being confined to a small group of contacts. A helpline and a set of FAQs had been set up to answer parents' questions and concerns. Members requested that regular information was provided on the status of schools reopening.

Following further questions, Members noted that a number of schools used rotas (slide 4) which were determined by risk assessments undertaken by the schools based on predicted numbers of children returning and available space and resources. It was anticipated that as staffing numbers increased the number of schools employing rotas would reduce. The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor advised that it was at the schools' discretion on how they set up bubbles and whether siblings were put into the same bubble or separated.

The Service Manager for Learning and Skills advised that government guidance would be followed on face coverings in school settings when it was received.

Members noted that furloughing related only to staff funded from private income. The Service Manager for Learning and Skills added that there was a statutory requirement to provide school meals to reception and year 1 children and the cost of these meals were met by a Government grant. The Director of Children's Services added that Government guidance on furloughing excluded local authority employees, but schools were able to furlough staff funded through private income (for example, for paid school meals) which had to be done through the Local Authority as the employer who could only make a single application. Nine schools had requested to furlough staff and the application has been submitted. The Service Manager for Learning and Skills advised that Government guidance had been issued on costs incurred due to the Covid-19 crisis and this would be considered at future meetings of the Schools Forum.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that in line with the national trend, referrals to Compass had fallen, but the referrals being received were of a complex nature. In terms of referrals to the NSPCC, which had reported a rise of 32%, it was expected that those referrals would be passed to the Local Authority as the statutory body for safeguarding referrals, which had not been received. The Director of Children's Services agreed to look into the matter.

In response to a Member's question on the disparity of educational experience of children at different schools, with varying levels of engagement for both curricular and pastoral support, the Principal Schools Improvement Advisor responded that

head-teacher briefings continued, with one to one conversations with head teachers to encourage dissemination of good practice and information. Where inconsistencies exist, these are challenged, and support provided. Schools were encouraged to offer continued pastoral care for pupils. Referring to GDPR concerns, he confirmed that this was not applicable, and added that there was trades union advice to teachers on the use of electronic platforms to stream lessons and contact children and this advice was different for primary and secondary schools. It was important that children without access to computer technology at home were not disadvantaged. Guidance on the expectations of the home curriculum had been requested from the DoE.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that some early years settings had continued to operate to provide childcare for looked after and key worker children. She could not currently provide information on whether schools would be operating during the summer holidays as Government guidance had not yet been provided. She confirmed that vulnerable children had been encouraged to continue attending school and Officers had challenged schools to make provision.

The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor confirmed that the Council did not hold data on the provision of schooling via the internet to children in rural areas. Small scale provision of internet dongles had been made for children in areas with poor internet signals via the Government laptop scheme for vulnerable children.

A Member commented that she had received a letter from the Parents and Carers Committee [PAC] that children with special educational needs were not receiving appropriate and differentiated work, that they were not receiving one to one support and Severdale was not using the correct criteria for children returning to school. The Director of Children's services responded that the letter had been received and would be following up the points raised.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services added his thanks to the school community in a challenging time, and to parents and young people who had adapted to the situation. He particularly thanked foster parents who had supported and accommodated vulnerable children, ensuring they had access to education and support. He continued that the reopening of schools had been an emotive subject but it had become clear how important it was for professionals to have eyes on children and young people for safeguarding purposes.

Members thanked the Director of Children's Services and staff for the outstanding work that had been undertaken during a challenging time.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted, and thanks extended to schools, families and Council staff for the combined efforts in working together in difficult times.

**74 Quarter 4, 2019/20 Corporate Performance Report**

The report was introduced by the Intelligence and Insight Manager. Members noted that quarter 4 was an extraordinary period with both the severe flooding and the

onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact of these events is demonstrated in the report.

In response to a Member's question, the Intelligence and Insight Manager I advised that the Local Transport Plan would be considered by the Road Safety Task and Finish Group as it currently existed. The Scrutiny Officer advised that the completion date for the document was 2021 which he considered to be a realistic date for such a large report. Members noted that the Road Safety Task and Finish group was the appropriate place for detailed consideration of the first drafts of the plan.

The Interim Acting Chief Executive, Director of Adult Services observed in response to a Members question regarding the Homeless Strategy, that The Homeless Agenda had moved forward at a staggering pace with a large increase in the numbers homeless people firstly due to the flooding and then individuals who had been previously accommodated by other households and could no longer be during the Covid-19 lockdown. He continued that this issue would have a significant impact on the Council.

A Member requested further information on the Council's programme to provide children with laptops during the Covid-19 crisis. The Interim Acting Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, advised that the allocation of laptops was not to schools but individual children. Children who met the criteria for laptop allocation were being identified. Five hundred laptops had been received and would be distributed as soon as possible.

Members endorsed the comments made on the outstanding work done by the IT Department to continue the work of the Council and developing new ways of working.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**75 Future Work Programme**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer introduced the Future Work Programme Report and members noted the items set out within it for the year up to November 2020.

Members noted that the suspended Overview Committees would be re-established in September 2020 and topics included in the Work Programme that were within the remit of those Committees would be returned to them.

The Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee confirmed that it would be meeting in July 2020 and the Joint HOSC would be meeting in early August 2020. She continued that the Joint Chairs of the Joint HOSC had had regular meetings with colleagues in the NHS to identify topics where the Committee could add value to the work being undertaken.

.....The Director of Adult Social Care confirmed that work had been undertaken with health and social care partners across both the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Authority areas as part of a systematic approach at pace, to do the right things in the right order in response to the pandemic crisis and maintaining existing development work.

**RESOLVED:**

That in addition to the scheduled meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020 an extra meeting will be held at the end of July. Each meeting will have 2 agenda items determined by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer in consultation with the Committee Chair.

**76 Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee**

**RESOLVED:**

That the next meeting of the Committee will be held at 11am on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date:

# SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2020**  
**11.00 am - 1.30 pm Virtual Meeting**

**Responsible Officer:** Julie Fildes  
Email: julie.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257723

### **Present**

Councillor Claire Wild (Chair)  
Councillors Joyce Barrow, Karen Calder, Roger Evans, Alan Mosley, Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock, Dave Tremellen and Leslie Winwood

### **77 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hannah Fraser. Councillor David Vasmer attended as substitutue.

### **78 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None were declared.

### **79 Minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2020**

Consideration of the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020 were deferred to the next meeting.

### **80 Public Question Time**

There were no questions from members of the public.

### **81 Member Question Time**

The Chair advised that two Member questions had been received. A copy of the report containing the detailed questions and their formal response is attached to the signed minutes.

- i) Received from Councillor R Evans in relation to the Highways Improvement Plan. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Evans requested that better communication of ongoing highways matters be communicated with Members to minimise inconvenience for the public.
- ii) Received from Councillor D Vasmer, in three parts, in relation to highways repairs, improved communication with the highway's contractor and contract monitoring. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Vasmer asked if the reference to the mixed local economy in the report before the committee, agenda item 7, was an indication of future thinking. The Director of Place responded that new technology would allow members to view performance in their Ward areas. He continued that the term Mixed economy related to the

use of different contractors and the direct management of the Lengths Man Scheme.

- iii) Councillor Vasmer observed that it would be useful to have access to the reports considered by the Highways Task and Finish Group.

With the agreement of the Committee the order in which items was taken was amended.

## 82 Highways Improvement Plan Update

The Director of Place, introduced the Highways Improvement Plan Update report. Members noted that the report had previously been considered by the Place Overview Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and the Audit Committee had identified three improvement measures at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

- Contract with Kier;
- Council provided services – improvements to processes and governance; and
- Improved use of resources.

The Director of Place continued that it had been recognised that a full and inclusive programme of highways improvement was required. Members noted a number of staff appointments to facilitate this, including the appointments of a Highways consultant, an Assistant Director, and a new Head of Highways.

Members noted that the Appendix A to the report set out fifty key focus points. The Director of Place confirmed that these were fully supported by Kier. He observed that the majority of focus points were categorised as either completed or on target for completion, this was attributed to the hard work of the team, especially in light of the additional pressure caused by the severe flooding at the start of the year.

The Director of Place informed Members that the renewed focus of the Highways Team had reduced the cost of works and had improved value for money through better organisation. Although, there were still on-going improvements and the Team were focusing on the best use of Government resources, which included £11m from the Community Infrastructure Levy, intended for the road infrastructure.

Members raised issues with the recently introduced MyShropshire portal and the number of reported issues which were rejected by the system and lack of communication of problems in Ward areas. The Head of Highways responded that the new system was still in the process of development and these issues would be resolved as the system expanded.

Members welcomed the improvements set out in the report and their speed of delivery, but asked officers to consider the state of rural roads and suggested that the plan should have been implemented sooner. The Director of Place responded that the contract with Kier had begun in April 2018, but highways frustrations had existed before this date and hopes that these would be resolved by the new contractor had been held. He continued that the mechanisms for contractor management had not been in place initially and the severe weather conditions had

compacted these problems. He continued that the programme was now in place to control key areas of the contract. The model allocated resources with three quarters of spending on A and B classified roads, but a better understanding of the issues of C classified road had been gained and the impact on them of heavy agricultural vehicles. A process of asset management planning had been initiated for this road classification. The Head of Highways added that this was a particular issue in the South of the County and work was being undertaken to improve the use of local contractors in addition to Kier and WSP in this area with the development of a local five-year plan, with procurement, audit and legal services all involved.

In response to Members queries regarding contract monitoring and communication issues, the Head of Highways confirmed that a new system was in place to improve this. Photographs were taken before and after each job and updates on work undertaken were now expected to be filed on a daily basis, these were verified by the audit process as working, in principle, with an audit currently being undertaken to assess the consistency of this approach. He continued that this approach worked well for small scale projects. Other local authorities had been approached for an alternative perspective on effective management of larger scale projects and once developed approaches would be trialled by Kier.

The Head of Highways confirmed that the changes to the structure and working practices had restored good will and moral with the staff. He continued that staff had been involved and consulted on as part of the process and had received support from both Workforce Development and Finance. Members requested that the organisational structure be distributed and that access to technicians was improved for Members.

In response to a Member's question the Operations Manager, Highways and Transport outlined the highways surface dressing programme and the importance of early intervention leading to reduced costs through delivering cost effective road repairs instead of road renewal. He agreed that that it was important to have conversations with housing developers about the impact of developments on the condition of surrounding roads and this was included in the Highways Plan.

Responding to a Member's query, the Head of Highways advised that the Highways Improvement Board was an Officer Group consisting of the Head of Highways, the Director of Place, the Highways Consultant and the Assistant Director of Place and it met regularly to review progress of highways issues. The Director of Finance Governance and Assurance added that there was a close working relationship between the group and the Finance department. The Director of Place explained that the Highways Improvement Board was responsible for programme level capital and revenue accounts and contract negotiations.

Members requested further information on the LED Lighting Plan and its cost implications. The Head of Highways explained that work had been undertaken to ensure that the lighting inspection regime was more efficient and cost effective. Advances in understanding since the agreement to move to a LED lighting scheme had delayed the implementation of the programme and the requirements of the contract had been revised to ensure it was commercial with the purchase of the lanterns going through the tender process.

Members noted that forward plans for WSP and Kier would be available in September 2020.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That the progress of the Highways Service in delivering actions within the Highways Improvement Plan be noted.
- ii) That the work of the Highways Improvement Board is considered by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee in the Winter of 2020/21

**83 Financial Monitoring Report, Quarter 4 2019/20**

The Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance introduced the Financial Monitoring, Quarter 4 2019/20 report and outlined the main issues of the report as set out in the summary and recommendations to Cabinet. Members noted that this report had been previously considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

In response to a Member's question the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance explained the financial changes, both increased costs and savings as a result of Covid-19 were still under consideration.

Members requested more information regarding the Council Asset disposal list. The Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance confirmed that this was a comprehensive list of all assets that could be considered for disposal, but more work was required to establish whether it would be appropriate to do so.

The Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance explained that reserves were held for a specific purpose and would reduce during the financial year as they were required. In addition to these the Council was required to hold a set level of reserves for situations which may not occur, such as severe weather.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**84 Future Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Officer advised Members that the usual Committee programme would be re-instated from September with all Scrutiny Committees meeting according to the Council diary.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That Climate Change and SEND be considered by the Committee at its meeting in July; and
- ii) That the Financial Strategy and financial matters caused by Covid-19 be considered at the September meeting of the Committee.

**85 Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 11am on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date:

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# SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2020**  
**11.00 am - 2.30 pm Virtual Meeting**

**Responsible Officer:** Julie Fildes  
Email: julie.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257723

### **Present**

Councillor Claire Wild (Chair)  
Councillors Joyce Barrow, Karen Calder, Roger Evans, Hannah Fraser, Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock, Dave Tremellen and Leslie Winwood

### **86 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Mosley and Les Winwood.

### **87 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

### **88 Minutes of the meetings held on 10th June and 8th July 2020**

Consideration of the minutes of the meetings held on 10<sup>th</sup> June and 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020 were deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

### **89 Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

### **90 Member Question Time**

There were no questions from Members.

### **91 Update on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Local Area Inspection**

The Acting Interim Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services presented her report and introduced Claire Parker, Director of Partnerships, NHS Shropshire CCQ and NHS Telford and Wrekin CCQ, and Zara Bowden, Chair of the Parent and Carers Council [PACC] who were in attendance. Members noted the significant areas of strength identified by the Inspectors during the recent Joint SEND CQC and Ofsted Inspection, as well as the areas identified for improvement. In response to a Member's observation, she confirmed that joint working between the Council and local stakeholders had undergone significant recent improvement and that the appointment of Claire Parker as SEND Health Lead, had further strengthened the strategic and operational aspects of the working relationship. This was endorsed by Ms Parker.

Members attention was drawn to section 5.6 of the report where areas of improvement were identified. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that Officers were aware of these areas prior to the inspection and work had already started to address the issues raised. The Inspectors had identified a lack of robustness and the need to improve methods of measuring outcomes in the Action Plan and a Written Statement of Action [WSOA] had been requested. The WSOA was in the process of being redrafted and Ofsted had agreed with the Local Authority and the CCG that it would be published on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

In response to a Member's question the Director of Children's Services confirmed that the Action Plan would be considered by the People Overview Committee after PACC, Ofsted and the CQC and had had the opportunity to make comment. The People Scrutiny Committee would have oversight of the delivery of the Action Plan once agreed with the CCG and PACC.

Referring Members to section 5.9.1 of the report which set out the six key findings of the Inspection, Ms Parker observed that the inspection had occurred before the outbreak and limitations of the Covid-19 Pandemic which had significantly changed working practices due to the restrictions and the need to adopt new technology. She cited the example of the Speech and Language Therapy [SaLT] Service which at the time of the Inspection had long waiting lists. Processes had been reassessed and the backlog had been significantly reduced.

Members noted that Shropshire had higher levels of school exclusions for children with special education needs than many other local authority areas. The Director of Children's Services explained that this was a complicated area and no one factor could be identified as the cause of this. She continued that a whole system approach was required to support schools. The Team Manager, Education Access Services explained that due to the Covid-19 crisis it was difficult to currently assess the effectiveness of the support provided. Ms Bowden added that the issue was not only about the inclusivity of schools but crossed over into many other areas of health provision and wrap around services and welcomed the improved relationships between education and health services.

The Director of Children's Services advised that the governance arrangements for overseeing joint working were under review as part of the Action Plan. It was anticipated that the current 0-25 oversight board would be replaced with a smaller more strategic oversight group, which would tie in more closely with the overview and scrutiny arrangements for the CCG and Local Authority. The importance of hearing the voice of parents and carers had also been recognised and it was anticipated that a parent/carers champion would be appointed to each SEND forum.

In response to a Member's question, Ms Bowden confirmed that PACC were satisfied with the areas addressed by the report, she noted that while some areas could have been more critical but other areas were reflected more poorly than expected. She continued that Post 16 transitional education or movement to adult services were of concern but these concerns were being picked up in the Action Plan and featured in discussions with regional leads.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that CAHMS would be included in the Action Plan. The Director of Partnerships, CCQ, added that it was acknowledged that CAHMS needed work and development to support all children and young people through mental health services and behavioural support services.

In response to a Member's observations regarding the historic relationships between stakeholders, the Director of Children's Services acknowledged that the issues raised regarding engagement of the Health and Wellbeing Board representatives would be addressed through the examination of the governance mechanisms. She expressed commitment to addressing blockages and barriers to drive forward the necessary improvements to the service.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Partnerships, CCG, acknowledged previous poor performance of the CCG but reassured Members of her determination to improve SEND in Shropshire, recognised through the Statement of Intent. She continued that it was important to now move forward.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services welcomed the inspection as an opportunity for all parties to come together and improve partnership working. He supported the importance of good relationships with the Health and Wellbeing Board and welcomed the positive attitude of the CCG and the opportunities this presented to work with partners in a constructive way.

The Director of Children's Services acknowledged a Member's observation about the possibility of increased waiting times to access services caused by the Covid-19 crisis. She agreed that this was going to be a challenge that all public services would encounter, but new ways of working and interfacing were being developed and would become part of the new normal. She added that it was still too early to fully understand the medium and long term impact of the crisis. The Director of Partnerships, CCG, added that re-instating health services suspended during the crisis was a hugely complicated process. She continued that the rapid move to digital solutions had been a positive outcome. Members noted that a return to the operating methods pre-covid was now highly unlikely.

In response to the Chairman's request for closing comments, Ms Bowden explained that from a parent/carer's perspective the biggest barrier with joint partnership working was the different layers of bureaucracy when different organisations tried to work together and conflicts these caused. She continued that joint working and commissioning were an essential part of the process and she welcomed the commitment to improve working relationships and continued that an improved voice for parents/carers through being invited to participate in the work of scrutiny committees was also a positive step forward. She observed that national agendas would assist with local issues, an example of this was the covid-19 response. She welcomed the commitment to finding ways of engaging young people directly without the need for parents to talk for them.

In response to a Members concern about children's return to school in September the Director of Children's Services confirmed that schools were aware that there would be issues with children transitioning to full time education. Work had begun with schools to ensure that they were prepared for the problems they may encounter.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That the GGC be thanked for attending;
- ii) That the contents of the report and actions identified be noted;
- iii) That the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee add the issues raised with regard to health to their work programme
- iv) That the People Overview Committee will monitor the implementation of SEND within Shropshire;
- v) That the date for publication of WSoA be noted as 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020; and
- vi) That both Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services and Climate Change be appointed as champions for SEND.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.26pm and resumed at 12.38pm.

**92 Climate Change**

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager introduced the report. He advised that he was the Leader of the Climate Task Force which had been established in November 2019. Members were reminded that Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and had approved the Climate Strategy Framework in December 2019, with the objective that the Council corporately would achieve net zero carbon by 2030. The Climate Strategy Framework set out how this would be achieved.

The Director of Place confirmed that carbon reduction policies ran through much of the work of the Council and the Council had a leadership role within the local communities to promote wider carbon reduction. He continued that despite the importance of this work, central Government provided few formal grants for the work to be undertaken. The Climate Task Force was promoting a better integrated narrative with Government.

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager agreed that early investment to reduce carbon emissions would result in longer term savings through improved energy performance, he continued that it was now possible to begin measuring and quantifying benefits although this was still complicated. The Sustainability Commissioning Officer added that emphasis was put on embedding renewable projects which were energy efficient and developing clear strategies with technical interventions to achieve these.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Place confirmed that planned changes to the use of Shirehall were being underpinned by a staff survey to assess the impact these would have on staff as well as work to fully understand the environmental impact of this change.

Members asked for further information on how the Covid-19 Pandemic had impacted on the Active Travel Strategy. The Director of Place confirmed that The Active Travel

Strategy featured in LTP4 submissions to central government in applications for funding to provide electric buses. Experimental transport regulation orders had been put into place which accelerated the increase in cycling and walking in Shrewsbury.

Members noted a number of other initiatives in the areas of waste management, Marches Energy Agency, housing development and energy generation.

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager explained the meaning of Scope 1,2 and 3. Which were terms derived from international greenhouse gas emissions and were standard definitions across the world. With Scope 1 being emission produced by the Council's own activity and Scope 3 was carbon emissions produced on the Council's behalf by contractors. He added that it was important to include all scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions when assessing carbon production.

In response to a Member's question, the Planning Policy and Strategy Manager confirmed that an extensive amount of work had been undertaken since the declaration of a climate emergency to embed and normalise climate change considerations in the Council's strategies and corporate governance systems across the Council. Members noted the example of how the Climate Change Policy had been incorporated into the new Local Plan and other planning policies, as well as the other projects set out in the report.

The Director of Place responded to a Member's query regarding the Council's support for carbon reduction in the wider community, that is was important to confidently engage and influence through policies which encouraged higher standards.

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager explained that it was important to be aware of the future impacts on climate change and be prepared for them through improving standards of design. It was anticipated that extreme weather would be more frequent, and this would impact on services. The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change added that the Council was already considering local energy networks to generate energy to be returned to the national grid. With green businesses being encouraged to relocate to the county with the view to making it a central base for the sector.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That the progress being made towards the embedding and normalising climate change in the Council's corporate governance, together with the projects and initiatives being developed as part of an action plan to deliver net-zero performance by 2030 be noted.
- ii) That the climate change draft action plan and quantified carbon budget be reviewed by the Communities Overview Committee in autumn 2020.

**93 Financial Strategy**

The Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance introduced the Medium-Term Financial Strategy report. Member noted that the Financial Strategy had been set and approved in February 2020 before the onset of the Covid-19 crisis and has subsequently been updated as it was effectively out of date before the start of the financial year. Further funding had been made available from Government after the updated report had been published.

The Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance outlined the main points of the report and explained that the financial pressures caused by the Covid-19 crisis were being carefully monitored with a report being produced at the end of every month detailing the expenditure and grants received.

In response to a Member's question regarding progress of the Government's Fair Funding review, the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance anticipated that this would be delayed due to the Covid-19 crisis and funding would be based on what had been received previously.

A Member asked for further information on a Government announcement that lost income would be re-reimbursed and the resources available for the establishment of recovery teams. The Director of Finance Governance and Assurance explained that the Income Guarantee was a complex formula with the first 5% of expenditure being the responsibility of the Council. The Government had defined the types of losses covered and these were funded up to 75% of expenditure. He continued that Council finance officers were working through the guidance to establish what was included in the scheme to enable the return to be completed.

The Director of Place added that two task force teams had been established to address recovery and the social impact on economic development in the County. He continued that the Growth Hub had been able to give advice on accessing finance to local businesses. Projects had also been accelerated that would benefit the local economy.

In response to a Member's question the Director of Place agreed that it was important that all stakeholders in the local economy worked with the Council on the recovery, matching needs to providers and sectors.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Medium Term Financial Strategy – July 2020 – 2020/21 to 2025/26, be noted.

## **94 Future Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that the other Overview Committees that had been suspended at the start of the Covid-19 crisis were restarting work in September 2020. Members commented that they had enjoyed considering topics outside the usual remit of the Committee and this had given an insight on partnership working during the Covid-19 crisis and the impact this had had on performance.

.....Members observed that new working methods had brought improvements in working practices, as well as problems caused by more agile working.

**RESOVLED:**

That the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership [LEP] be invited to report to the September meeting.

**95 Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee**

Members noted that next meeting of the Committee would be at 2.00pm on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date:

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