



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

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2015**

**9.30 - 11.50 am in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND**

**Responsible Officer:** Tim Ward

Email: [tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01743 252739

### **Present**

#### Shropshire Councillors

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)

Councillors Andy Boddington, Vince Hunt, Robert Macey, David Turner, Peter Cherrington (Substitute) (substitute for Kevin Turley), Roger Evans (Substitute) (substitute for Hannah Fraser) and Jane MacKenzie (Substitute) (substitute for Kevin Pardy)

#### Co-Opted Members (Non Voting)

Mark Hignett

## **65 Apologies and Substitutions**

65.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hannah Fraser, Councillor Peggy Mullock, Councillor Kevin Pardy and Councillor Kevin Turley

65.2 Councillor Roger Evans substituted for Councillor Fraser, Councillor Peter Cherrington substituted for Councillor Turley and Councillor Jane McKenzie substituted for Councillor Pardy.

## **66 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

66.1 None were declared.

## **67 Minutes**

67.1 **Resolved:** -

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2014 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## **68 Public Question Time**

68.1 There were no questions from members of the public.

## **69 Members' Question Time**

69.1 There were no questions from Members.

With the agreement of the Committee agenda item 10 was taken next.

## **70 Havenbrook Short Break Planned and Emergency Pilot Evaluation**

- 70.1 Members received the report of The Head of Social Care and Safeguarding which provided Members with feedback regarding the short breaks initiative at Havenbrook.
- 70.2 The Head of Social Care and Safeguarding reminded Members that the Pilot Scheme had been developed as part of the wider Looked After Children (LAC) Strategy, and aimed to prevent young people having to come into local authority care as part of a flexible range of support that could be offered.
- 70.3 The Head of Social Care and Safeguarding advised Members that during the pilot the scheme had been extended to provide crisis care as well as the planned short break provision and to date 13 of the 42 young people that had used the short breaks service had been crisis admissions.
- 70.4 The Head of Social Care and Safeguarding advised members that of the 29 young people that had received planned short breaks only 2 had gone on to be LAC. Furthermore of the 13 that had received crisis care, 6 became LAC, 6 went home to parental care and 1 moved into 16+ supported living arrangements, and that of the 6 who had returned home 4 continued to receive planned short breaks as part of a support plan to prevent further breakdown.
- 70.5 In response to a question from the Chair the Havenbrook Manager confirmed that staff had adjusted well to the changes and that the new way of working enabled staff to be more "hands on".
- 70.6 The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services informed the meeting that she had attended Havenbrook as part of a Reg. 33 visit and had spoken to service users who had told her that they valued the service immensely. She added that feedback from parents and carers had also been very positive. She also welcomed the fact that feedback from Ofsted had been helpful in the design of the provision.
- 70.7 A Member welcomed the support for the scheme from parents and carers and commented that it was interesting that Ofsted had been so positive. The Head of Social Care and Safeguarding commented that there was a lot of challenge to councils to do something different and that she welcomed the input from Ofsted. She informed the meeting that a number of local authorities had shown interest in the scheme.
- 70.8 A Member asked what areas of the County the young people who used the service came from and what provisions were in place to get them to and from school. The Havenbrook manager advised that where a transport plan was in place this was adhered to otherwise members of staff transported the young people to the relevant school.
- 70.9 The Chair congratulated Officers and Staff for their work in developing the short breaks initiative and making it a success.

**70.10 Resolved: -**

- That Members note the outcomes for children that have used the short break provision and the positive feedback from young people and parents on the value of the resource.
- That Members welcome the proposal to continue Havenbrook as a short break resource to children and young people on the "edge of care".

**71 Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report**

71.1 Sally Halls, Independent Chair of Shropshire's Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) presented the Annual Report (copy of both report and presentation attached to signed minutes).

71.2 The Independent Chair commented that overall there was a positive direction of travel and agencies worked well together to prioritise the safety and welfare of children. She welcomed the positive relationship between the Board and the Children's Trust which had been strengthened with the appointment of Lorraine Laverton as Business Manager for both the SSCB and the Children's Trust.

71.3 The Independent Chair outlined the forthcoming challenges for the Board, which included avoiding the unintended consequences of steps taken as a result of austerity measures whilst meeting increased demand on services and concerns around the accessibility of CAMHS, especially tier 2 services. She also expressed concern over the emotional well-being of children especially the rise in self-harming.

71.4 The Independent Chair informed Members that the Board would be monitoring the following areas in the forthcoming year: -

- The impact of forthcoming budget reductions on safeguarding services
- The rate of referrals and re-referrals to children's social care and the rate of children with a second or subsequent Child Protection Plan
- The contribution of schools to the Early Help and Child Protection Services and the impact of the early help strategy
- The oversight of vulnerable groups, including those who are educated at home, or are missing from education
- Safeguarding arrangements in independent schools
- Progress in implementing PSHE which addresses issues of sexual exploitation
- The plans for the transition of the health visiting service to the local authority

71.5 The Independent Chair advised Members that the Board had set areas for development by the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) which included:

- ensuring that Academy Schools had the necessary safeguarding policies in place

- the development of a quality assurance scheme to ensure that outcomes are monitored and evaluated for effectiveness
- the provision of on-going awareness raising and training with professionals and organisations working with young people.

In response to a question from a Member the Director of Children's Services advised that the role of the LADO was statutory, and was to deal with allegations or concerns regarding the conduct of adults who worked with young people and to give advice to employers and voluntary organisations on safeguarding matters relating to employees

71.6 The Independent Chair commented that Councillors also had a role in safeguarding in the following ways: -

- By considering the impact on safeguarding children as part of considering reports and information presented to scrutiny.
- By using knowledge of the local community to feedback information around safeguarding children.
- By disseminating knowledge and spreading the message that "safeguarding children is every ones business"

71.7 A Member commented that Shropshire was a very rural county and asked how it equated with other counties with regard to the number of home educated children. The Director of Children's Services advised that she did not have the figures to hand and would circulate the information with the minutes of the meeting, but did not feel that Shropshire was out of line with its statistical neighbours."

71.8 A Member commented that it may be useful to pass information through Parish Councils and that this could be done through SALC. The Director of Children's Services commented that the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services was working with the SSCB to explore the possibility of holding some awareness raising events. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services commented that the SSCB website was also a good source of information and suggested that an information sheet be prepared for Members to ensure that a consistent message was presented. Members felt that this would be very useful.

71.9 A Member asked whether pupils undergoing home schooling were subject to the same Ofsted inspection as other pupils. The Independent Chair advised that there was no formal inspection for home schooled pupils. It was noted that Ofsted inspected how the Council had oversight of home schooling and the support that it offered to home schooled pupils. She added that the difficulty, from a safeguarding point of view, was how those home schooled pupils who may be at risk from harm were identified and commented that this may be a valuable piece of work for the Committee.

- 71.10 A Member asked whether all agencies were able to fully participate in the work of the Board and whether there was anything Members could do to encourage agencies to participate. The Service Manager – Safeguarding and Review advised that work was being carried out to engage harder to reach agencies such as GP's to encourage them to report back to the Board and work was also being done to strengthen links with key partners in adult services. The Service Manager commented that Councillors had a role as School Governors as schools often did not have the capacity to attend or engage with the Board's work. It was suggested that the Director of Children's Services include some information in the regular information circular to Governors.
- 71.11 A Member asked what measures were taken to assess the impact of the changes currently being made. The Independent Chair commented that the Board had agreed outcome measures and a report was to be taken to its next meeting which would help to inform Board Members whether anything further was required. The Director of Children's Services commented that work was being carried out within the Early Help team on the identification of vulnerable children especially around the raising of awareness thresholds. She informed Members that a report was being taken to a forthcoming meeting of the Board and this report would be brought to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.
- 71.12 A Member asked whether the Task and Finish Group referred to in paragraph 5.6 had finished its work. The Service Manager – Safeguarding and Review informed Members that the work of the Task and Finish Group was still ongoing and a report would be made to the Board later in the year.
- 71.13 A Member commented that independent Schools were not sharing pupil data and that many pupils that were included in the children missing education data were actually being educated at independent schools. The Director of Children's Services commented that the Council had established a good relationship with the independent schools and that she had regular meetings with the independent sector which covered a range of issues including safeguarding. She advised that there was a representative of the Independent Sector on the Schools Safeguarding Board and that Section 11 audits were completed for all the independent schools.
- 71.14 The Chairman thanked the Independent Chair for her hard work and for presenting the report.
- 71.15 **Resolved:**
- i. That the Young People's Scrutiny Committee note the information contained in the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual report 2013/14
  - ii. That information regarding safeguarding be sent to School Governors via the Governors bulletin

## 72 Safeguarding and Taxi Licensing

- 72.1 Members received the report of the Senior Commissioner (Public Protection) which set out recent developments within Shropshire Council's hackney carriage and private hire licensing regime which aimed to further strengthen improvements in safeguarding practice, in particular in relation to children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 72.2 The Senior Commissioner (Public Protection) advised Members that substantial work on safeguarding practice had resulted in the proposed changes to the policy and the associated action plan.
- 72.3 A Member asked whether criminal checks on applicants from other countries were possible. The Team Manager Operations Community Safety advised that where it was not possible to carry out DBS checks, the Embassy of the country of origin was contacted to obtain a character reference for the applicant.
- 72.4 Superintendent McWilliams welcomed the improvements to operational practice especially the more thorough and robust assessment of applications and asked what provisions were in place for the review of licences. The Senior Commissioner (Public Protection) advised that licences were reviewed after 12 months and then every three years and that there was provision to review a licence at any time where matters of concern had been raised.
- 72.5 A Member asked what provision was made for the spot checking of taxi drivers especially those that transported school children. The Senior Commissioner (Public Protection) advised that specific enforcement was not carried out at schools but spot checks were regularly undertaken to ensure licences were being complied with. The Team Manager Operations Community Safety advised Members that all drivers went through the same vetting process and all drivers wishing to transport school children had to be registered with the Passenger Transport Unit. This Unit held contracts for school transport and removal from this register resulted in drivers not being allowed to hold contracts for transporting school children.
- 72.6 The Independent Chair SSCB welcomed the Council's recognition of the "Jay" report and various correspondence from government and commended the work of public protection staff in developing the Policy. She suggested the following amendments to the Policy:
- That the third bullet point of section 1.2, be amended to give an explicit requirement for taxi drivers to report matters of concern which could relate to the safety of children/ vulnerable persons rather than to tackle child sexual exploitation and trafficking as she considered this to be the responsibility of the Police and other agencies rather than drivers directly. She added that the usual practice was for agencies (in this instance, the Private Hire Operators) to have a suitably trained Designated Officer for Safeguarding to whom concerns would be reported and then passed on to the relevant authorities.
  - She welcomed the provision of training but considered that all taxi drivers should be expected to complete some basic safeguarding awareness training. She suggested that, given that drivers may not be willing to give up time for training, an e-learning package could be used.

- She queried the possibility of including some information about CSE in the Policy, possibly as an appendix.

Members welcomed these suggestions.

72.7 The Independent Chair SSCB, commented that the SSCB received regular assurance reports from agencies and Council departments and asked whether Public Protection could provide regular reports. The Head of Public Protection agreed to do this.

72.8 A Member commented on the number of licence applications that had been refused by the Licensing Panel and whether there was a reason for this. The Head of Public Protection commented that an emphasis had been placed on public safety and that he would prefer to take a hard line on applications and have them challenged in the Magistrates' Court rather than licence an unsuitable driver. He added that taxi firms were being encouraged to do preliminary checks themselves to prevent them putting forward applications from unsuitable applicants.

72.9 **Resolved:**

1. That the following amendments to the draft Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Licensing Policy 2015 – 2019 be proposed to Cabinet: -
  - That the third bullet point of section 1.2, be amended to remove the requirement for prospective and licensed hackney carriage and private hire drivers and operators to tackle child sexual exploitation and trafficking and to replace this with an explicit requirement for such drivers and operators to report matters of concern which could relate to the safety of children/vulnerable persons to relevant authorities.
  - In order to facilitate the reporting, as referred to in the bullet point above, it is usual practice for agencies to have a suitably trained Designated Person for Safeguarding to whom concerns are reported and that this Designated Person has a responsibility to report such information to the relevant authorities. Given that this is the case, it is proposed that the Policy requires Private Hire Operators to have a suitably trained Designated Person for Safeguarding who undertakes this role.
  - That all taxi drivers complete basic safeguarding awareness training.
  - That an Appendix giving information about CSE be added to the Policy.
2. That Public Protection provide regular Assurance reports to the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board.

73 **Corporate Parenting**

73.1 Members received a presentation from the Service Manager – Safeguarding and Review (copy attached to the signed minutes) which set out the role of councillors and officers as corporate parents, and work being done to raise awareness of the role of corporate parents.

73.2 The Chairman thanked the Service Manager for his presentation.

#### **74 Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2016/17**

74.1 Copies of the Financial Strategy and the Draft Business Plan had been circulated. The Director of Children's Services reminded Members that the Business Plan had been refreshed and that the Financial Strategy was an ever evolving document. She added that the priorities for Children's Services remained unchanged.

74.2 A Member commented that some figures in the current plan were different to those that the Committee considered at the December meeting. The Director of Children's Services commented that whilst the overall level of savings required had not changed, the in year savings had been amended. She advised Members that a number of one off savings had contributed to the overall savings made but that any overspend on budgets would need to be added to the savings to be made in the next financial year. She added that there was additional pressure on the budget around Looked After Children as the number of children in the system was rising.

74.3 A Member asked how the £1.4 million saving in the redesign of early help and prevention provision would be achieved. The Director of Children's Services advised the meeting that the following work was being done: -

- the range of services being offered was being assessed to reduce overlap and duplication
- a focus was being made on locality working
- a review of how Children's Centre services are delivered collaboratively.

She commented that it was not about "providing less" but rationalising services to use the resources available to gain the maximum effect.

#### **75 Transfer of Commissioning Arrangements for 0-5's**

75.1 Members received the report of the Associate Director – Public Health which set out the proposals and arrangements regarding the transfer of Health Visiting and Family Nurse Partnership services to the local authority and the potential opportunities that this would bring for future integration of services and support for children and families in Shropshire.

75.2 The Associate Director – Public Health advised Members that the commissioning responsibility for Health Visiting Services and the Family Nurse Partnership would pass to the Local Authority on 1 October 2015 and that from 1 April 2015 NHS



England would be working in partnership with Shropshire Council to facilitate the novation of the contract.

75.3 The Associate Director- Public Health advised the meeting that details of the contract had not yet been received and it was proposed to set up a Working Group, reporting to the Healthy Child Programme Partnership Board, to take the transfer forward It was proposed that a member of the Young People's Scrutiny Committee would sit on this working Group.

75.3 Resolved: -

- That Members note the proposals and arrangements regarding the transfer of Health Visiting and Family Nurse Partnership services to the Local Authority and the opportunities that this would bring.
- That a further report be brought to Scrutiny in about 2 months' time.

**76 Work Programme**

76.1 The meeting received copies of the Committee's Work Programme and the Cabinet Forward Plan.

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

**77 Date of Next Meeting**

77.1 Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Young People's Scrutiny Committee would be held on Wednesday 1 April 2015 at 10.00am.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....