



## PEOPLE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2018**

**10.00 - 11.17 am in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND**

**Responsible Officer:** Linda Jeavons

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### **Present**

Shropshire Councillors

Councillor Peggy Mullock (Chairman)

Councillors Kevin Turley (Vice-Chair), Hannah Fraser, Christian Lea, Elliott Lynch, Cecilia Motley, Kevin Pardy and John Price

Co-Opted Members (Voting)

Sian Lines

### **5 Apologies and Substitutions**

5.1 An apology for absence was received from Carol Morgan (Shrewsbury Diocese).

5.2 There were no substitutions

### **6 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

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

6.2 There were no declarations made.

### **7 Minutes**

#### **7.1 RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meetings of the People Overview Committee held on 9 May 2018 and 17 May 2018 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **8 Public Question Time**

8.1 There were no questions from members of the public.

### **9 Members' Question Time**

9.1 There were no questions from Members.

## 10 Supported Housing for Young People

10.1 Members received the report of the Housing Assistance Manager which provided an overview of current housing options for young people in Shropshire and specifically those who were Looked After or Care Leavers.

10.2 In response to questions from Members, the Housing Assistance Manager responded as follows:

- At this point in time, Shropshire Council does not “take-on” private properties but it does inspect them to make sure they are up to an appropriate standard;
- Housing Services do consult with the Planning Department and appropriate data is sought and used in an effort to assess and bring forward the appropriate number of properties. The Planning Department are aware of the need for one-bedroomed properties;
- All young persons in need would be accommodated. Shropshire Council has a responsibility and duty to accommodate any child in need;
- It is important to note that not all providers are local providers, but some are national providers who have made the decision to provide elsewhere. The local providers have continued to be and remain local providers. Shropshire Housing Association had no intention of leaving the market and was planning to build more. It is not just about providing supported accommodation it is about providing the right accommodation, whether this be private rented or shared properties within social housing. The Housing Support Model is an old model and although remains suitable for some people it is not suitable for all. Some of our young people when they reach 18 years of age are more than capable of living independently. We need to balance provision; and
- Notwithstanding that the majority of young people would like to remain in Shrewsbury, and this may be because they have either grown-up in the town or because it is the major market town in the County, it is important that provision and options of where to live are made available across the County.

10.3 The Deputy Portfolio Holder – Housing explained that as part of the Local Plan Review, the type and affordability of housing provision would be considered, although this was not yet at a stage where exact figures could be quoted. It was important to note that schemes should remain viable whilst still delivering the maximum affordable and social housing that could be realistically obtained from any developments. There were also plans to develop a Housing Charter and this would include a review of the private rented housing provision and maybe the introduction of a landlords accreditation scheme. Both the Deputy Portfolio Holder – Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People thanked the Housing Assistance Manager and her team for the report and welcomed the close-working between both Housing Services and Children’s Services.

10.4 The Director of Children’s Services explained that one of the outcomes of the work undertaken over the past few years was the purchase and refurbishment of New

Century Court; this had meant the retention of 12 valuable spaces. She stressed the importance of the need to ensure adequate and correct provision in the future.

10.5 **RESOLVED:** That the following actions and improvements to improve the options available and joint working needed to improve a young person's ability to live independently as well as increase suitable provision be agreed:

- Employment of a Children's and Young Person Co-ordinator (budget agreed and in progress);
- Employment of a Private Rented Sector Officer (budget agreed and in progress);
- Implementation of independent living skills for all those leaving care (in progress);
- Better planned move-on for all those leaving care (in progress);
- Agreement for Children's Services to act as guarantor for all Looked After Children aged 17 who are allocated a property in social housing stock up until their 18th birthday (agreed at corporate parenting panel on 21st June 2018);
- Secure supported housing projects within the County (ongoing);
- Improve access to semi-independent housing options for those leaving care (ongoing);
- Improve and increase the use of Discretionary Housing Payment, Enhanced Housing Management and Housing Benefit funding (ongoing);
- Identify corporate funding to provide better housing options for those leaving care (ongoing); and
- Monitor all Looked After Children's move-on options at age 18 (ongoing).

## 11 Placements for Looked After Children Task and Finish Group

11.1 Members received the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Officer which provided an overview of the work carried out by Shropshire Council's Placements for Looked After Children Task and Finish Group. The Group had looked into the challenges the Council faced in providing residential care for its Looked After Children. The report had responded to proposals from Shropshire Council to develop its residential care provision for its Looked After Children.

11.2 The Head of Safeguarding, Children's Services was present and introduced the report. Councillors Kevin Turley and Kevin Pardy, both members of the Placements for Looked After Children Task and Finish Group, provided an overview of the work of the Task and Finish Group and outlined their personal insight and findings of the group.

11.3 In response to questions from Members, the Head of Safeguarding, Children's Services responded as follows:

- A Member had suggested that if every local authority established their own residential units would this then mean that there would be difficulties in identifying suitable placements for our most vulnerable children in the private sector. The Head of Safeguarding noted that local authorities had already

established residential beds and this had had no impact on the open market. The majority of authorities were currently looking at ways to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and doing something similar and setting up 1 to 4 bedroomed units. It is unlikely that we will find ourselves in a situation whereby we are going to have our own residential units and not need the private sector as we do now. The demand is there. Shropshire is not the only authority that has seen a growing number of children – every local authority has seen an increase. Additional beds will not have an impact. Private providers are struggling to meet the needs of our vulnerable children and they don't always have the appropriate skills. Private providers are under a lot of pressure because of the Ofsted rating and if they are not good or outstanding then a number of local authorities will not use them. Therefore, they do not want to care for complex young people in case it jeopardises their Ofsted judgement;

- We are doing more but in a different way. Alongside this proposal is additional work being undertaken across our fostering services. There has been an increase in the numbers of looked after children and an increasing number of children under 5 coming in to local authority care as a result of the risk of significant harm. There is support and an agreement from Shropshire Council to increase our capacity and recruit more foster carers and not only to recruit more foster carers for younger children but also to recruit more specialised foster carers for older children. This would mean that complex children who in the appropriate foster placement could live in a family environment.

11.4 The Director of Children's Services thanked Councillors for their participation and involvement in this process. She reiterated that it was important for elected Members to understand the needs of our children and understand the work of the service. She thanked the Placement Team who work tirelessly around the clock in extremely difficult and highly pressured circumstances and who make a huge impact on some of our most vulnerable children.

11.5 **RESOLVED:**

That the recommendations put forward by the Placements for Looked After Children Task and Finish Group, as set out below, be agreed:

Shropshire Council to:

- develop plans to set-up:
  - Two new two-bedroom specialist care residential homes;
  - A three-bedroom step-down care residential home;
  - Convert Chelmaren's Statement of Purpose to a children's home for long-term children;
  - Convert office space at Chelmaren to provide for semi-independent accommodation for Shropshire Council's Looked After Children who will soon be leaving care;
  - Develop a pop-up unit; and

- Delay the building of any step-down residential home, until the two specialist care residential homes are established and working successfully.

## 12 Work programme

In considering the Work Programme, Members suggested the following additions:

- Youth Offending Services (19 September 2018)

To understand the reasoning behind why such a high number of children in care go on to require the help of the Youth Offending Service. Is there anything we can do to reduce the high numbers? The Scrutiny Officer suggested that this might be better considered in March 2019, a year or more after the policy had first been introduced.

- Education Attainment (21 Nov 2018)

Given the budget cuts, has this had any impact on education attainment? Has this impacted on teacher training in any way?

To include mention of CPD and Apprenticeships and how and if they are working.

- Given the increased visible drug activity in towns and parks consider what is happening with drugs in our schools and colleges and the impact of this on young people

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the above suggestions, the Work Programme be noted.

## 13 Date of next Meeting

13.1 Members were reminded that the next meeting of the People Overview Committee would be held on Wednesday, 19 September 2018 at 10.00am.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....