



PEOPLE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020

Meeting held virtually via Microsoft Live

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

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Present

Shropshire Councillors

Councillors Peggy Mullock (Chairman), Kevin Turley (Vice-Chair), Roy Aldcroft, Ruth Houghton, Christian Lea and Cecilia Motley

52 Apologies and Substitutions

52.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Sian Lines (Diocese of Hereford).

52.2 There were no substitutions

53 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

53.1 Councillor Ruth Houghton declared an interest in agenda item 6 as a family member accessed the SEND service.

54 Minutes

54.1 The minutes of the last meeting, held on 15 January 2020, had been circulated

54.2 RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the last meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee held on 15 January 2020, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman

55 Public Question Time

55.1 There were no questions from members of the public

56 Members' Question Time

56.1 There were no questions from Members

57 Covid-19 Update

57.1 Members received the report of the Assistant Director – Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, which set out the response of Children's Care and Safeguarding to the Covid Pandemic.

- 57.2 The Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding advised the meeting that in line with the regional pattern Shropshire had seen a decline in referrals at the start of the pandemic and that levels had returned to normal when children had returned to school and that there had been an increase in seriousness of cases and level in harm seen.
- 57.3 The Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding advised the meeting that there had been delays in progressing care plans especially with partner agencies which had meant that children were not exiting the system which had contributed to an increase in looked after children.
- 57.4 The Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding advised the meeting that staff had adapted well to the new ways of working and had maintained focus on high risk children and that virtual meeting had been utilised for a range of meetings and had proved particularly successful for Adoption and Fostering Panels. She added that challenges had arisen when working with partner organisations due to the different systems used but in the main these had been overcome.
- 57.5 The Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding advised the meeting that work was ongoing with planning for the predicted further increase in demand and to develop a sustainable model that fits with the Council’s “new way of working”. She added that officers were also preparing for an OFSTED assurance visit but also a full inspection was expected in the new year.
- 57.6 The Chair asked what additional staffing would be required to meet the increase in demand, The Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding advised the meeting that there was some additional capacity within teams and that work was ongoing to develop different ways of working to meet the demand, and that finding additional experienced staff was proving difficult. The Director of Children’s Services reminded the Committee that the policy of “growing our own” social workers was working well with 8 trainee workers currently in post and plans to recruit more apprentice social workers in the new year.
- 57.7 In response to a question regarding the requirement for new foster carers the Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding advised the meeting that recruitment was continuing successfully but that the process was taking longer as assessments were more challenging but still being carried out successfully. She went on to say that the number of “connected carers” was increasing.
- 57.8 In response to a question around the increase in complexities of family situations and risk of harm and how these were dealt with, the Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding advised the meeting that the process was very similar to that normally followed apart from the fact that the initial case conference would be held virtually and there was need to ensure that families could take part.
- 57.9 The PFH Children’s Services thanked all those involved for all the work that had been carried out to keep the children of Shropshire safe this was endorsed by all Members present.

57.10 RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That Members of People Overview Committee consider the content of the report.
- 2.2 That Members acknowledge the cross working across the Directorate that has enabled the work to safeguard vulnerable children, including schools.
- 2.3 That Members note the increase in demand across the service and impact of this across the service.
- 2.4 That Members note that the identified next steps for continuing to safeguard children at risk of harm in Shropshire continue to place demands on the service as we continue to respond to Covid 19 and try and resume some service normality.

58 Work Programme

- 58.1 Members received the report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer which set out the Committee's proposed work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.
- 58.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Officer took Members through the proposed topics that would be covered by the Committee.
- 58.3 The Chair asked that a report be brought to the next meeting concerning how schools had dealt with the return of pupils after the Covid lockdown.

58.4 RESOLVED:

That Members approve the proposed work programme as attached at appendix A to the report

59 Date of Next Meeting

- 59.1 Members were reminded that the next meeting of the People Overview Committee would be held on Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 10.00am

60 Exclusion of Press and Public

60.1 RESOLVED:

That in accordance with the provision of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4 (5) of the Council's Access to Information Rules, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item.

61 SEND Inspection Action Plan

- 61.1 The meeting received the exempt report of the Director of Children's Services, which set out details of the "Written Statement of Action" which had resulted from the Shropshire Local Area SEND inspection that had taken place in January 2020.

61.2 RESOLVED:

That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: