



PEOPLE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2019

10.00 - 11.10 am in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257713

Present

Shropshire Councillors

Councillor Peggy Mullock (Chairman)

Councillors Christian Lea, Cecilia Motley and Kevin Pardy

Co-Opted Members (Voting)

Sian Lines

Co-Opted Members (Voting)

32 Apologies and Substitutions

32.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Vasmer and Kevin Turley.

32.2 Councillor Roger Evans substituted for Councillor David Vasmer.

33 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

33.1 There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

34 Minutes

34.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19th December 2018 had been circulated.

32.1 RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the People Overview Committee held on 19th December 2018 be approved as true record and signed by the Chairman.

35 Public Question Time

35.1 There were no questions from members of the public.

36 Members' Question Time

36.1 There were no questions from Members.

37 Committee Update

- 37.1 In response to a Members query regarding the Education Transport Assistance Policy, the Director for Children's Services explained that it was still under review and a report would go to Cabinet for their consideration in due course.
- 37.2 Members requested further information on plans to provide additional in-county accommodation provision for looked after children. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that this issue was being examined and a project board had been established to identify potential properties and that Council would be considering a report on the issue at its next meeting.

38 Early Help Hubs

- 38.1 The Head of Early Help, Partnerships and Commissioning updated Members on the Early Help Family Hubs. (Copy of presentation attached to signed minutes).
- 38.2 Members noted that there were seven newly created Early Help Family Hubs, with all teams being relocated into them by 1st April 2019. It was planned that partner organisations would also relocate to the Hubs if they weren't already in residence. She continued that there were a total of 26 buildings. The Head of Early Help, Partnerships and Commissioning confirmed that service provision was not restricted to the Hubs but service delivery was undertaken in service users homes or community facilities where private meeting space could be provided.
- 38.3 The Head of Early Help, Partnerships and Commissioning explained that Troubled Family Places had increased by 146% with 3,200 children in the programme, twelve additional Family Help Assistants had been recruited. She continued that 220 families had been successfully stepped down to the Early Help Programme.
- 38.4 Referring to the Digital Transformation Programme, the Head of Early Help, Partnerships and Commissioning advised Members that a new software system called Liquid Logic would be implemented by April 2020. This would allow improved place based planning through improved data collection and interrogation, leading to better understanding of issues in communities, such as Bronze Level Tasking and rises in County Lines drug trafficking. This improved data analysis would also allow improved service management through more accurate prediction of service requirement. She added that the web pages has also been amended to make contacting the service easier, and social media was also used to promote services.
- 38.5 In response to a Member's question the Head of Early Help, Partnerships and Commissioning confirmed that other authorities were already successfully using the new programme. The Programme for Shropshire had been specifically designed to incorporate successful features from previous versions of the programme employed by other authorities.
- 38.5 Members noted that good relationships with schools had been cultivated and that all professionals involved in the care of the child and family were working together

and making necessary referrals. In addition, a drop-in service for young people with mental health issues was provided.

38.6 The Head of Early Help, Partnerships and Commissioning agreed to provide Members with relevant information and phone numbers.

39 **Progress and Impact of the Delivery of the Ofsted Action Plan**

39.1 Members received the report of the Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Safeguarding which set out the Ofsted Action Plan and Care Leaver Action Plan.

39.2 The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding outlined the background to the report as detailed in the report document. She observed that progression was being achieved through all 12 recommendations and additional actions to address the key areas of learning in the Ofsted Action Plan. Likewise, with the Care Leavers Action Plan. She continued that these were dynamic documents and as such would always be a work in progress.

39.3 Members noted that since the publication of the Action Plan, a further visit from both Ofsted and Mark Riddell, Department of Education national advisor, had been received. These visits had provided further areas of focus for the new Action Plans, some of which built on the original actions. The action plans formed key areas of focus for the Corporate Parenting Panel work programme.

39.4 Members noted that robust a robust Quality Assurance Framework had been identified in both Ofsted Inspections.

39.5 Members discussed the issue of offering apprenticeships with the Council to looked after children school leavers. Members noted that a new approach to this was being taken which was now based on the aspiration of the school leaver.

39.6 Referring to the housing needs of looked after children leaving the care, the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding advised that the system had been changed to enable gold banding status to be issued prior to the applicants 18th birthday. She continued that although there were still challenges to be overcome, this enabled housing colleagues to more effective planning of housing provision. Members noted the appointment of an Interim Service Manager who had previously worked other authorities and had wide experience of issues experienced by young people leaving care.

39.7 In response to a Members question, the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People assured Members that Children's Services had achieved a vast amount but there was always more that could be done. The Service recognised the importance of getting young people ready to live independently in the same way as a good parent would do.

39.8 **RESOLVED:**

- i) That it be agreed to close down the Ofsted Action Plan and Care Leaver Action Plans; and

- ii) That on-going work as part of on-going service improvement work be monitored, with on-going oversight through Quality Assurance Framework and Corporate Parenting Panel.

40 **SEND Peer Review**

40.1 RESOLVED:

That the SEND Peer Review Update be deferred to a later meeting of the Committee.

40.2 The Director for Children's Services advised Members that she was expecting a SEND Inspection at some time during the next year, and she would provide details of the preparations being undertaken for the inspection to a later meeting of the Committee for consideration and comment.

40.3 Members noted that Children's Services were involved in a pilot of Financial Diagnostic Peer Review in February with the LGA and it had been agreed that they would run and give feedback on the new tool. It had identified that the Department's largest expenditure was on looked after children, but the application had also found high costs from the use of agency social workers and recruitment and retention due to staff turnover levels. In response to a Member's question, the Director of Children's Services responded that there was no obvious cause for staff churn apart from a national shortage of social workers which affected all authorities. She continued that agency social workers accounted for around 22% of the workforce and cost approximately double that of those directly employed.

40.4 Members were also updated on the progress of the Digital Transformation Programme in relation to Liquid Logic which allowed for significant advancements in children's social care and freed up staff time which had previously been spent on recording data. She confirmed that there was a dedicated project team for its development and implementation.

41 **Work Programme**

41.1 Members considered the future work programme of the Committee.

41.2 A Member requested that the Committee consider the Council's Empty Homes Strategy and the work undertaken by the Empty Homes Strategy Task and Finish Group in 2015. He queried why the budget for the Empty Homes Strategy had not been fully spent and had been taken forward to the next financial year.

41.3 Members discussed issues caused by the reduction in post 16 educational transport assistance. It was suggested that the Committee should consider this in greater depth and the provision from other service providers. It was agreed that due to timeframes this would be considered at the Committee's next meeting in March and the SEND update would be postponed.

42 Date of Next Meeting

42.1 Members were reminded that the next meeting of the People Overview Committee would be held on Wednesday 27th March 2019 at 10.00am.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: