



PEOPLE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2019

10.00 am - 12.05 pm in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

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Present

Shropshire Councillors

Councillor Peggy Mullock (Chairman)

Councillors Christian Lea, Kevin Parry and David Vasmer

Co-Opted Members (Voting)

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1 **Election of Chairman**

1.1 It was proposed, seconded and duly resolved:

That Councillor Peggy Mullock be elected Chair of the People Overview Committee for the forthcoming municipal year.

2 **Apologies and Substitutions**

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Sian Lines and Councillors Kevin Turley, Cecilia Motley.

2.2 Councillor Roy Aldcroft substituted for Councillor Cecilia Motley.

3 **Appointment of Vice Chairman**

3.1 It was proposed, seconded and duly resolved:

That Councillor Kevin Turley be appointed as Vice Chair of the People Overview Committee for the forthcoming municipal year.

4 **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

4.1 There were no declarations of pecuniary interest made.

5 **Minutes**

5.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 27th March 2019 had been circulated.

5.2 RESOLVED

That the minutes of the People Overview Committee held on 27th March 2019 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

6 Public Question Time

6.1 There were no questions from members of the public.

7 Members' Question Time

7.1 There were no questions from Members.

8 Committee Update

8.1 There were no updates for the Committee.

9 Warmer Homes

9.1 It was agreed that this item would be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee.

10 Empty Homes

10.1 Members considered the Regulatory Services Operations Manager's Report and Presentation [copy of presentation attached to signed minutes] which gave an overview of the empty homes work carried out by Regulatory Services and the legal powers available.

10.2 Members noted that there were a variety of reasons that properties were left empty for periods of time and that it was not illegal to allow a property to remain unoccupied, but it was a wasted resource. The Council had a risk led approach and would only take action where there was an identified risk to public safety, or empty properties became detrimental to the amenity of an area or caused a statutory nuisance to neighbours. Once risk was identified the Council had escalating options to address the issue.

10.3 Initially the Council would attempt to identify the owner and enter into a dialogue to offer advice. If the owner was unwilling to take action, the Council had legal authority to reduce risks through serving notices to the owner to take action, or to take action itself and recover the costs. This may include boarding up, addressing vermin issues, carrying out work where adjoining properties were being damaged. In response to a Member's question, the Regulatory Services Operations Manager advised that no action could be taken without evidence of nuisance. Neighbour's complaints formed part of the picture but had to be substantiated with independent evidence.

10.4 The owner could also be encouraged to return the property to use through the imposition of a 100% premium being added to the Council Tax while the property remained unoccupied.

- 10.5 The Regulatory Services Operations Manager advised that in more serious cases the Council had other options, such as enforced sales, compulsory purchase and empty dwelling management orders. None of these would be entered into lightly and all other options would be exhausted first as they involved high costs to the Council in both Officer time and resources. The Council must be certain that the action taken was in the public interest and where possible to recover the costs incurred.
- 10.6 In response to a Member's question, the Regulatory Services Operations Manager advised that the Council was in the process of pursuing a compulsory purchase order and a forced sale. This was the first time that the Council had resorted to this action and learning points would be taken from both cases once they were completed. She was unable to give a timescale for the completion of the cases but estimated that it should be within the next six months and agreed to update the Committee on the progress of the cases at the September meeting of the Committee. The Chairman suggested that the Portfolio should be invited to address the Committee on this matter at this meeting.
- 10.7 The Regulatory Services Operations Manager stressed the importance of partnership working across the Council to identify the different risks posed by empty properties and enable a complete picture of a property to be compiled and the most sustainable approach found. She agreed that the resources were not available to address the issues caused by every empty property and priority was identified based on risk. In response to a Member's query she agreed that resources were limited and more work could be undertaken with greater resources but these were not readily available and there were other calls on the departments resources.

11 SEND inspection preparation

- 11.1 Members considered the report of the Service Manager, Special Educational Needs and Disability [SEND] which outlined the approach how Shropshire Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group [CCG], working with partner agencies have reformed services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and how the anticipated Ofsted and Care Quality Commission will review the impact of this work.

The Service Manager, SEND, explained that Ofsted and the CQC were undertaking inspections in all 152 local authority areas over a five-year period and was an inspection of the local are including the local authority. Education, social care, early help and public health were to be included in the inspection. The inspectors would visit a number of different settings during their inspection.

- 11.2 Members heard that to date ten of the inspections in the West Midlands area had been completed and four remained to be done, including Shropshire. The earliest inspections had the most positive outcomes and five authorities had received Statements of Action. The Service Manager – SEND advised that the inspectors had identified strong strategic leadership as a key issue. Members noted that Shropshire Council considered that it had a strong SEND framework with a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, but some of the issues that would be inspected were out of the authorities control such as the identification of children with special needs. Members noted that Shropshire was in line with a National trend in

identifying an increase percentage of children needing additional assistance, although numbers from school to school varied with some schools identifying as many as 30% of children and other schools only identifying 2% of children. It was recognised that the schools with low numbers needed support to ensure that they were not under identifying children with special needs, to ensure outcomes were improved for all children and their families.

11.3 Members discussed the role of Cams and the Director of Children's Services advised that the service was commissioned by the CCG and overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board. She continued that weaknesses in the provision had been identified and work was being undertaken to rectify this.

11.4 Members heard that 89% of Shropshire's schools received an outstanding classification award from Ofsted and the County had a network of early year providers trained to deliver specialist support which enabled children with significant or complex needs to be identified at an earlier point.

11.5 In response to a Member's question, the Director of Children's Services advised that the county had a higher than average number of young people not in employment, education or training but this was partially caused by the geography of the county and difficulties encountered by young people in accessing transport. She continued that the Council supported a range of internships both with the Council and local employers.

11.6 **RESOLVED:**

That the progress outlined in the report be noted and that the Committee receive a further report on progress at its meeting on 20th November 2019.

12 **SEN support in specialist school hubs**

12.1 Members received a presentation from the Service Manager, Special Educational Needs and Disability [SEND]. Copy of presentation attached to the signed minutes. Members noted that the first hub provision, Kettlemere, had been established in 2014. In 2017, the Government had announced that all local Authorities in England would receive capital funding to invest in provision for children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan [EHCP] and the age range for educational provision had been extended to 25 years old.

12.2 The Council had considered the most cost-effective use of this funding to achieve the best outcomes for children with additional needs. The Council looked to establish Special Educational Needs [SEN] Hubs in existing schools which had the building space, grounds and appetite to participate in the scheme. In total four primary schools and three secondary schools would be open by September 2019 with SEN Hubs providing specialist provision. Further funding was available to continue with the scheme.

12.3 Schools with SEN hubs received funding to provide specialist staff training packages and were able to provide therapeutic approaches for students with additional needs.

Once established it had been found that the SEN Hubs were working collaboratively and also developing their own approach to support the children using their services.

- 12.4 Carl Rogers, Head Teacher of Whittington Primary School was welcomed to the meeting and Members received a presentation on the work of the school as a SEN Hub. [Copy of presentation attached to signed minutes].
- 12.5 Mr Rogers advised Members had there had been a large increase in the numbers of children with a SEND registration, many of whom had complex needs that could not be met in mainstream education. His Governors had welcomed the siting of the SEN Hub at Whittington Primary School provided it did not adversely affect the primary school.
- 12.6 Members heard that the staff and children had been enthusiastic and supportive of the SEN Hub being established, and to ensure full integration of the children attending the SEN staff had been recruited from existing staff who had the passion needed to work with children who had special needs. These staff had received extensive training and were involved in the curriculum design. He noted that he had worked closely with Julie Metcalf and relied on her support.
- 12.7 Mr Rogers continued that the SEN Hub had had a soft opening in January 2019 without placements but now had three children, and from September 2019 the unit would be completely teacher led. The school was looking to grow this provision. He continued that the real benefit of the SEN Hub was that it enabled the school to take a student led approach with each child's programme being designed around the needs of that child.
- 12.8 Mr Rogers acknowledged the excellent support of Council Officer, Gary Dean who had allowed the school autonomy to develop the provision whilst providing valuable support and advice when needed.
- 12.9 Members welcomed Julie Metcalf, Operational Lead of the Kettlemere Centre, to the meeting. Ms Metcalf gave a presentation [copy attached to the signed minutes].
- 12.10 Members noted that the Kettlemere Centre was the first SEN Hub to open and its first student was now in the process of taking his GCSEs. The Centre had provision for 16 pupils. Provision was inclusive and children from the SEN Hub attended lessons in the mainstream environment. They received additional bespoke support according to their individual needs. On entering the SEN Hub children underwent a period of assessment and did not join the mainstream classes until it was appropriate to do so. As progression was made the level of support was gradually reduced and students were prepared for adult life. Each child's progress was recorded using a tool provided by the Autism Educational Trust which took into account the four key area of difference for autistic children. Information was also collected from the child's key worker and parents to ensure a full picture. This information was fed into the intervention work for each child.
- 12.11 Members heard about the progress of two different children attending the SEN Hub and the progress they had made.

12.12 The Director of Children's Services observed that this was a good news story and the council was reliant on the service providers and she was grateful to them for delivering the excellent outcomes. The strategy was developing a range of provision for vulnerable young people to meet their needs.

12.13 In response to a Members question, the Director of Children's Services advised that more schools were coming forward but their ability to participate in the scheme relied on having sufficient space to accommodate the SEN Hub, and the support of staff and the governing body for the project.

13 **Work programme**

13.1 Members noted the items to be considered at the next meeting in July, including the item on Warmer Homes which had been deferred.

13.2 Member were reminded of the work programme session to be held on 10th July 2019 at 3pm. All Members were asked to attend.

14 **Date of next Meeting**

14.1 Members were reminded that the next meeting of the People Overview Committee would be held on Wednesday 17th July 2019 at 10.00am.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: