

**Committee and Date**

Council
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Item

Public



Annual Report – People Overview Committee 2022/23

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Gwilym Butler		
Scrutiny Chair:	Peggy Mullock		

1. Synopsis

People Overview Committee looked at a range of key topics in 2022/23 which are summarised in this paper.

2. Executive Summary

The Shropshire Plan includes ‘Healthy Organisation’ as a priority outcome and the Strategic Objective that “We will ensure councillors are supported to advocate for their constituents but to also be ambassadors for the council”.

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the governance of the council, where councillors who are not on Cabinet can hold decision makers to account and make evidence recommendations to inform and influence the development of policy.

This report shares the annual statement for 2022/23 for the People Overview Committee.

3. Recommendations

Members are asked to note and comment on the 2022/23 annual statement for People Overview Committee.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 Effective Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) is a feature of the Council's governance arrangements, particularly where the Council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range of factors that could result in risks to Council of not doing O&S effectively.
- Failure to challenge and hold decision makers to account.
 - Failure to link O&S work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management – failure to demonstrate added value
 - Failure to carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations.
 - Failure to engage partners and providers.
 - Failure to ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources.
 - Failure to ensure that O&S can operate as the voice of communities.
 - Failure to draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.
- 4.2 To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- Operating in an apolitical manner.
 - Clarity of vision and purpose
 - Overview and Scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
 - Effective engagement and commitment by Members and officers at all levels, including Cabinet, Opposition Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs and Senior Officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
 - Robust work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
 - Access to and availability of robust data and intelligence
 - Good relationship with partners and providers
- 4.3 Overview and Scrutiny Committees have remits that cover the breadth of the work of the Council, as well as looking externally including Health Services and provision through Health Overview and Scrutiny requirements.
- 4.4 Topics for Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes are identified based on a number of different considerations including an understanding of risks to the Council, employees, people who use services, to service themselves, and to communities. These may be identified through reviewing performance information and comparing with others, changes to national and local policies, budget information, feedback from communities and customers/service users, feedback from partners/providers, and reports from regulators.

- 4.5 During Overview and Scrutiny work evidence will be gathered that builds on this understanding to inform the development of conclusions and evidence-based recommendations.
- 4.6 The use of external peer challenge such as that offered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny provides objective review and feedback about opportunities to develop the effectiveness and impact of Overview and Scrutiny. The Council carries out a regular review of overview and Scrutiny to collect feedback from Members and Officers on what is going well and where there are opportunities for continuous improvement.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the annual statements of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees set out in this report.
- 5.2 Effective Overview and Scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of "what works" at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of the situation locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.

6 Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes directly link to the Shropshire Plan priorities, including Healthy Environment which is built around climate change and carbon reduction, and the natural and historic environment.
- 6.2 Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore focus of the Place Overview Committee i.e.
- delivery of the agreed lower carbon footprint and emissions targets, including air quality, by the Council and its partners;
 - actions to protect, enhance and value Shropshire's natural resources and respect the historic environment;
 - arrangements to safeguard and promote a clean and green environment;
 - the delivery of work to reduce landfill and waste;
 - management and development of the physical and digital infrastructure

7 Background

- 7.1 The People Overview Committee considered a full range of topics from its remit, carrying out activity to both hold decision makers and the providers of services to account, as well as making recommendations to inform the development of services and the delivery of outcome for Children and Young People. The following section provides a summary of key topics and the work done.

Regulatory inspection outcomes

- 7.2 Over the year the committee have maintained a clear focus on the outputs and emerging outcomes of the regulatory inspections that took place with a particular interest in SEND. They recognised that the outputs and learning from the inspections were key features of reinforcing good practice and outcomes, and addressing opportunities for improvement.
- 7.3 They were highly aware of the significant role of effective working across a range of system partners in supporting children and young people to realise their full potential. These include the:
- SEND written statement of actions following joint CQC/Ofsted inspection
 - Ofsted inspection of SEND report

SEND Written statement of actions

- 7.4 The committee looked at the work to deliver the written statement of action established following the January 2020 joint Ofsted/CQC inspection of services for children with a special education need and disability (SEND). The Members consideration of the topic reflected that the inspection and the support and services were multiagency and were also provided with an update on preparations for a further inspection of the local authority and its partners.
- 7.5 Through their work the Members voiced their frustrations with the delay in child assessments and the lack of trust in those closest to children with additional needs.
- 7.6 They were also keen to be able to support efforts of the team progressing the work and asked if they could be notified if there was anything they could do to assist and expedite the process.
- 7.7 It was questioned whether Shropshire Council works with neighbouring councils to use their framework. It was confirmed that this is shared from a strategic perspective and would be part of the place planning taking place in the autumn term.
- 7.8 Members also questioned how SEN hubs are working. It was noted that this would be on a future agenda.

Ofsted inspection of SEND

- 7.9 The committee considered the points arising from the inspection, with the outputs from their focus summarised below. The committee:
- Voiced their concerns regarding the Health sector's ability to commission and deliver the Accelerated Progress Plan to Cabinet; and that Cabinet may wish to write to the Department for Education or Department of Health to express these concerns.
 - Recommended that Shropshire Integrated Place Partnership (SHIPP) and the Learning Disability and Autism (LDA) Board include a standing agenda item or similar approach to ensure key items/papers related to the Area SEND Partnership can be raised with SHIPP/LDA members.

- Recommended that there should be bi-annual updates to Overview and Scrutiny on the progress of the action plan, including the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP), and the impact this is making to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Children and Young People Mental Health Partnership

7.10 The committee heard about iThrive model for delivering mental health services and that the BeeU teams are aligned around this model to provide support including crisis resolution, community eating disorder service and ASD assessment team. They were also appraised of the challenges in holding the NHS to account and their support was requested. Members:

- Raised concerns regarding the lack of information about outcomes, the time it takes to receive support, the time it takes from triage to receiving care and the children who may have been left behind, with particular focus on the availability and accessibility of support through school holidays.
- Queried availability and access to BEAM for children and young people living in rural areas, and requested data and evidence of where support was available and where the CYP were from.
- Requested that a review of the support for children looked after in Shropshire is carried out including to investigate a different offer for them through the MPFT.
- Raised significant concerns about the waiting times for assessment and support and recommended that a validation exercise could be carried out to reduce the current wait time and were advised about a £10m investment and a focus on early intervention.
- Recommended that a letter of support be sent to the regional team emphasising concerns about the level of funding available to support place CLA to escalate through NHS.
- Recommended that there should be closer working between Overview and Scrutiny and the relevant system partners to ensure that the required information is available when it is needed.

Criminal Exploitation

7.11 This was a substantial and high priority topic for the committee that was looked at over 2 meetings.

7.12 The Committee developed their understanding of the topic by:

- Learning about the multi-agency partnership looking into child exploitation in Shropshire and the progress made since 2019. This involved hearing from the Chairman of the Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership, West Mercia Police, various teams within Shropshire Council, NHS Midlands Partnership and West Mercia Youth Justice Service.
- Hearing about the response of the Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership to the Telford enquiry in child sexual abuse and the way in which the services have developed in line with national learning, not just the Telford enquiry.
- Considering several case studies that demonstrated how the different partners work together to achieve a shared outcome.

- Learning that training was available for licensees; whether that be a taxi driver or takeaway restaurant owner, to identify vulnerable people and refer them for further support from the relevant partner.
- Hearing that TREES (Together Reducing & Ending Exploitation in Shropshire) was confirmed as the formal pathway for reporting concerns with regards to child exploitation, and that an agreed process was in place which included triage, risk assessments and data sharing with members of the partnership to provide support on a case by case basis.

7.13 The committee undertook more detailed exploration of the issues following a number of lines of inquiry they identified including:

- The proportion of exploited children who were not currently in education and the actions being taken to reduce the number of permanent exclusions and to track any children currently out of education as they were deemed to be at a higher risk of exploitation.
- What services were on offer to support children, including the TMBSS referral unit, Bright Stars Boxing, diversionary pathways through the Youth Justice Service and drug and alcohol advisors.
- Whether there was a gap in the provision of psychological and emotional support and, as a result, a waiting list for assessments.

7.14 They made the following recommendations:

- Implementation of a pathway for addressing the trauma experienced as a result of exploitation, this would need to be in collaboration with the ICS, with the aim of ensuring direct access from Together Reducing & Ending Exploitation in Shropshire (TREES) to specialist trauma support relating to exploitation.
- Implementation of a transition pathway for young people who continue to be exploited at the point of turning 18 years old. Working with Adult Services in Health and Social Care, the voluntary sector and the police.
- A safeguarding report is due to be published which will include the voice of the child, learning needs to be taken from the review and recommendations implemented as appropriate.
- Implementation of a 5 year partnership strategy re: exploitation. There needs to be a continued commitment to the response to exploitation across the partnership; including the funding of staff and direct support to young people – so that the TREES Team delivers a truly multi-disciplinary response to the needs of children and young people. Working with Education Access to ensure that schools can be supported to keep children in school and avoid permanent exclusion.

The Virtual School

7.15 The Committee considered the Shropshire Virtual School, hearing from the Head about the services and support that are provided by the team for children and young

people in care or who have been in care so that they can have excellent opportunities to fulfil their potential. Some of the key points the members recognised and highlighted were:

- It is statutory that all Children who are Looked After must have a Care Plan, of which the PEP (Personal Education Plan) is an integral part and should reflect a personalised approach to learning that meets the child's identified educational needs, raises aspirations and builds life chances.
- That in terms of attainment, the GCSE results for the students had been higher than other Looked After Children in the country, and that KS2 results had also been well above the national performance indicators.
- That the focus was now being put on the progress of children with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and the Post 16 cohort had been recognised within the recent Ofsted report which was a great success.
- That Shropshire did have a higher Post 16 ratio of staff to children at approximately 1:98 rather than 1:55 in other areas

7.16 Following their consideration of the issues, recommendations that the committee approved included:

- The Virtual School Head Teacher to lead a working group across Social Care to focus on improving PEP quality and effectiveness across the LA - the PEP itself being a joint responsibility and integral part of the Care Plan.
- The PEP working party to consider how all Year -1 and Year -2 children will have high quality PEPs as a joint responsibility across the LA; this will also be dependent on staffing ratios and capacity at the school (in relation to Recommendation a)
- That the opportunities to develop the Post 16 PEP on to an electronic platform for September 2022 should be worked through so that it fulfils requirements and supported robust reporting.
- That a celebration event for Shropshire's Children in Care should be created in consultation with the participation sub-group.
- That the participation sub-group should have the development of the Children in Care Council to as a key focus.
- That the Virtual School Head Teacher to work in conjunction with Health and Social Care in order to develop effective use of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) information in relation to supporting positive mental health of Shropshire Children in Care.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Meeting Papers for the People Overview Committee April 2022 to March 2023

Local Member: All

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]
