

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 10 November 2022 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 2.00 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Nigel Simpson – in the Chair

Councillor Kate Gregory (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Nigel Champken-Woods
Councillor Imade Edosomwan
Councillor Andy Graham
Councillor Michael O'Connor
Councillor Bethia Thomas
Councillor Michael Waine
Councillor Liam Walker

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Liz Brighthouse (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services)

Officers:

Karen Fuller (Interim Corporate Director of Adult Social Care), Kevin Gordon (Director for Children's Services), Victoria Baran (Interim Deputy Director Adult Social Care), Tom Hudson (Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer), Jonathan Deacon (Interim Democratic Services Officer)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

14/22 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR 2022/23

(Agenda No. 1)

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** that Councillor Simpson should be appointed Chair of the Committee for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year. Councillor Simpson assumed the role of the Chair at this point.

15/22 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

(Agenda No. 2)

The Chair welcomed attendees and thanked Councillor Corkin for previously chairing the Committee in a professional and well-balanced manner.

16/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 3)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Leverton. Councillor Champken-Woods substituted for Councillor Leverton.

An apology for absence was also received from Councillor Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care.

17/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 4)

Councillor Champken-Woods declared a personal interest that he and his wife are chair and vice-chair of trustees for a day centre for the elderly in Thame.

18/22 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 5)

The Committee considered the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 June 2022. It was **AGREED** that the Chair should sign the minutes as an accurate record.

It was requested that it was minuted, as it had been raised at a number of previous meetings, that the Council Chamber was not conducive to the requirements for People Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings. It was also requested that rather than focus largely on strategic matters in relation to items considered, there should be a greater emphasis on performance and outcomes.

There had been an item at the Committee meeting in June in respect of the Home to School Transport Policy Working Group Project Plan. Clarification was sought on future meeting dates of the Working Group.

Councillor Brighouse advised the Committee that a press release was being submitted later that day that an independent Education Commission was being established. She was hopeful that the Committee would be able to review the recommendations.

19/22 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 6)

There were none.

20/22 TRANSITIONS INTO ADULT SOCIAL CARE

(Agenda No. 7)

The Committee heard initially from a witness, Kathy Liddell, a family carer with a 26 year old daughter with learning disabilities. The family had first experienced Oxfordshire's social care services when Ms Liddell's daughter was 15. Ms Liddell spoke about joining the co-production group to help other families which included officers delivering services and young people who used the services. A key aspect

which came out of the group meetings was having a named individual who could take families through the process from teenage years through to the age of 25. This did not just relate to educational needs but also included where the young person was going to live and how he/she was going to work and earn money. The group looked at best practice at other county councils. Ms Liddell added that she was now working with Oxfordshire Family Support Network. The Moving into Adulthood Service (MiA) was invaluable for young people and their families.

Members also heard from Victoria Baran, Interim Deputy Director Adult Social Care, Karen Fuller, Interim Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Kevin Gordon, Director for Children's Services, in relation to this item. Ms Baran confirmed in her presentation that the MiA Service had been developed in response to recommendations made by the co-production group, referred to by Ms Liddell. The Service worked with young people from 18 to 25 years of age, with an in-reach into Children's Services from the age of 16. Having a named link worker from the age of 16 enabled the young person and their family to build a relationship with the Service from an early point and provided them with consistency through their journey into adulthood.

There had been a big focus on improving accessibility of information. For instance, webinars were being delivered to schools and colleges, young people and their families. A Moving into Adulthood guide would be published later this year and would assist in understanding a complex system. Young people were being encouraged to identify their own aspirations with the option of chairing their own review meetings. The Council was working collaboratively with Oxfordshire Employment Service and Community Connections to support young people to achieve their outcomes.

There was an emphasis on improving co-ordination between teams and partners, including operating a Multi-Agency Placement and Commissioning (MAPaC) forum with a single route for all young people needing funding from more than one team. Also, Children's and Adults' Social Care teams were undertaking joint training in areas such as Mental Capacity, the role of social care in SEND and, the Working with Families training delivered by the Oxfordshire Family Support Network. Quarterly Health Transitions meetings ensured that the health care of young people was taken into account during their transition alongside the social care aspects.

Ms Baran advised that the Service was currently actively supporting 385 young people to plan for their journey into adulthood. Since the service launched in June 2021 it had worked with a total of 560 young people. 85% of young people open to the Service had had an assessment by their 18th birthday and there was confidence this would increase in the future. There was also confidence that the figure of 21% of all referrals to the Service being 16 year olds would increase given the working with partners. The earlier identification and planning helped to avoid making decisions in crisis situations. 27 young people had been supported to move out of residential education establishments back into the family home or into supported accommodation in a planned fashion.

Future plans included expanding the "Chair my own review" initiative, giving the young person choice and control and ensuring they were able to voice their aspirations for the future and aligning MiA planning with the SEND Planning Lives

Process which takes place at age 14. This would further improve early planning and would enable young people to develop a single future plan that would take into account their education, health, and care support requirements.

Other key points included that no new money was invested in the development of this service. It was formed through a realignment of pre-existing funding in Children's and Adults Social Care, which enabled the re-organisation of how we support young people through their journey into adulthood. Also, since the implementation of the team the number of children in relatively high-cost residential placements that move into residential placements as an adult was reducing.

The Committee noted in the presentation that longer term strategic activity, in partnership with Housing and Planning, included development of a joined up Housing Needs Assessment (5-10 years) across all needs working with the District Council to ensure the County Council would be better linked to district plans and Section 106 funding. The Committee considered that there was a need for senior officers to have a more co-ordinated approach in order to identify opportunities for Section 106 funding in terms of housing needs. There was also an opportunity for more joined up working with the District Councils on how best to use the S106 funding to ensure the right mixture of housing for vulnerable residents. Members of the Committee sought clarification that there was an appropriate strategy in place for the spending of S106 money and Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.

It was recognised that the old model of residential care and education provision outside the county was not tenable in the longer term. It was noted that steps were being taken to address this, including an additional 50 supported living placements being delivered in county in 2022/23.

Overall, the Committee considered that there was progress and a vision in place as a result of the establishment of the Moving into Adulthood Service.

The Committee recommended the following:

Recommendation 1: That senior officers work in a holistic and co-ordinated fashion in order to identify the potential opportunities for Section 106 capital funding in terms of housing needs.

21/22 CHILDREN AND ADULTS' SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE (Agenda No. 8)

Kevin Gordon, Director for Children's Services, introduced the report and provided a presentation at the meeting. He stated that the council currently employs 811 FTE staff in Adult Social Care (ASC) and 1,021 FTE staff in Children's Social Care. In terms of those who were employed by the Council's care providers, 14,500 people were working in residential care homes, homecare and day centres. The social care workforce also consisted of 1,300 Personal Assistants work in the county supporting people at home. Many unpaid carers also contributed significantly.

The challenges for recruiting and retaining staff included the underlying economic factors such as Oxfordshire being an expensive place to live and strong competition

from other sectors in a buoyant local labour market in the South East. Social care roles were sometimes perceived to be unskilled jobs with little career progression and relatively low wages were paid for what can be a very demanding job.

Mr Gordon referred to the impact of Covid generally on people leaving the workforce in the UK and that the increase in vacancy levels in the internal and external social care workforce at Oxfordshire was a widespread phenomenon. A deep dive review of the issues impacting the recruitment and retention of children's social workers had been undertaken this year. In relation to the findings, work was progressing to reduce the demand flow into statutory Children's Services and caseloads were stabilising. There was for now a continued reliance upon agency workers until such time as work demand could be managed. The Council had a plan in place to 'grow your own' social work staffing, with an established Social Work Academy that supported the learning and development for students who wish to enter the social work profession and those who are newly qualified, to experienced practitioners and those aiming to become managers. The Council was able to be quite selective in introducing people into the programmes, including local people and it was hoped there would be longer term retention.

An alternative source of experienced social workers was the recent employment of six International Social Workers. It was expected that an additional six would be recruited in 2022/23.

Options being looked at in terms of retention of staff included market supplements for hard to recruit to posts and lump sum long-service payments and also career break opportunities such as sabbaticals for staff who may otherwise be considering leaving due to stress or burnout the option to take time out to support their wellbeing. The Council would explore the potential to offer sabbatical leave after 3 years of service for staff in hard to recruit teams.

The presentation drew the Committee's attention to the ASC legislation, 'Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care' and 'People at the Heart of Care'. As one of six 'Trailblazer' local authorities, OCC was working with the DHSC to trial key aspects of the reforms. It was stated that the work that had been done on the Oxfordshire Way made the Council more resilient than others in terms of responding to the reforms and new ways of working.

The Council had in place a programme of activity to support employers in the care market. This included Funding the Care Workers' Charity to enable provision of hardship grants for Oxfordshire care workers and 'New Starter' grants to help people joining the Oxfordshire Care workforce with the cost of starting a new job.

The Council was exploring its offer in relation to key worker housing, taking into account the expensive nature of housing being a barrier to recruitment and retention. A group of officers within the Council were reviewing this matter.

The Committee, in its findings, took into account a number of responses to questions from Mr Gordon, Ms Fuller and Councillor Brighthouse. The Committee observed that whilst there were specific aspects to improving retention of staff in the internal workforce, providing the package that could make OCC the Council of choice, there

were similarities with other Council employees including highways engineers. It was recommended to Council that a Council wide retention strategy was introduced.

The Committee was keen to understand what the relative cost was of losing internal workforce staff to agencies. Data was requested, including the in-house hourly rate in comparison to the agency hourly rate.

The issue of key worker housing was discussed. It was queried whether there was scope for interim housing as had been provided for key workers in the 1960s. It was noted that there were provisions in respect of Section 106 funding for key worker housing and there was the potential for this to be explored. It was recognised that currently there was a lack of emphasis on partnership working between the County Council and the District Councils regarding key worker housing. Dual hatted Members could play their part in raising this in addition to it being a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Chair suggested that Members of the Committee schedule some time to shadow key workers to get a better understanding of their roles. He would be discussing this matter with the relevant directors.

The following action was **AGREED**:

- 1) That the Director for Children's Services and the Interim Corporate Director of Adult Social Care provide data on the relative cost of losing internal workforce staff to agencies. This is to include the in-house hourly rate in comparison to the agency hourly rate.

It was **AGREED** that the wording of the recommendations would ultimately be delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. However, the Committee was seeking two recommendations. Firstly, for a Council wide retention strategy to be introduced and secondly, to have a partnership approach to key worker housing, including with the District Councils. There was also the potential for Section 106 funding for key worker housing to be explored.

Councillor Brighthouse left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

22/22 ADULT SOCIAL CARE QUALITY AND ASSURANCE

(Agenda No. 9)

Karen Fuller introduced the report and in conjunction with Victoria Baran provided a presentation at the meeting. The Health and Care Act 2022 had introduced a new duty for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to independently review and assess how Local Authorities were delivering their Care Act function. The key elements of CQC's new strategy were independent assurance to residents about the quality of service, assurance driven by needs and outcomes for residents, working towards stronger safety within the system and acceleration of improvement.

Reference was made to the progress the Council had made with the extensive programme of transformation, resulting in the Oxfordshire Way. This was in order to improve outcomes for residents, improve the governance structures, form a stronger

integration with health partners and focus on using residents' feedback to inform decision making. The Oxfordshire Way had been co-produced with partners across the county and was the Council's vision of supporting people to live well at home in their community, remaining fit and healthy for as long as possible. The Oxfordshire Way aimed to provide people with the ability to support themselves through personal, local and system assets to lead independent lives and strongly aligned with the CQC's assessment framework. The introduction of the CQC assessment allowed the Council to build on its transformation programme.

The CQC would be using a Single Assessment Framework to assess services. The framework was based on a set of quality statements describing what good care looks like and Local Authorities were required to evidence their commitment to these quality statements through feedback, policies and data. There was a strong focus on placing people's experiences of care at the heart of the process.

Areas of focus for Local Authority assessments included Working with People in terms of supporting people to live healthier lives, assessing needs, including unpaid carers; Providing support with market shaping, commissioning, workforce capacity and capability, integration and partnership working; Ensuring safety in safeguarding, safe systems, pathways and transitions and Leadership in terms of governance and risk management at all levels, culture and values of the workforce and organisation, innovation, continuous learning and improvement.

The Committee was advised that there was a delay to DHSC sign off on methodology which was part of the Framework Implementation. It was expected that the CQC Digital Solution design, build and implementation in order for ASC to upload its evidence, would be available by March 2023. The Go Live date was scheduled for April 2023.

ASC was preparing by engaging with the CQC in co-producing the Framework and commissioning an independent consultant to review its readiness for assurance and provide insight into further development opportunities. It built on the findings of the independent review with its own self-assessment workshops for operational teams.

Next steps included aiming to embed a culture of continuous improvement and development aligning with the ethos of the CQC strategy and our corporate values of 'Always Learning' and 'Daring to do it differently'. By further embedding and building upon the successes identified through Teams Led Transformation and delivery of the Oxfordshire Way ASC would continue to reduce the number of people waiting for assessment. The Quality Assurance project board was developing a detailed action plan setting out further next steps with specific timeframes for implementation. This would be aligned with the final CQC Assurance Framework once it has been published. By strengthening feedback mechanisms ASC would gain much improved insight into how local residents feel about the service they receive.

The Committee noted that ASC was exploring opportunities for independent peer review with conversations taking place with the LGA regards the offer of a peer review to provide further independent scrutiny and offer check and challenge to the process of self-evaluation. Members of the Committee supported this concept of external check and challenge. This would be further discussed as part of the work

plan. It was suggested that the outside engagement that ASC had was clearly set out and could be included in the Council's Forward Plan.

No recommendations were made in relation to this item.

23/22 ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

(Agenda No. 11)

The Committee decided to take this item prior to the Co-Optee Recruitment Update in order that Karen Fuller was able to provide an update. Tom Hudson, Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer, advised the Committee that many of the actions were still 'in progress' due to the timing of meetings as they awaited a response from Cabinet. There would be an update to all the Committee's recommendations recorded at the previous meeting in June 2022 at the next meeting in January 2023.

Mr Hudson and Ms Fuller referred specifically to an action included in the Action and Recommendation Tracker report which had been recorded at the June 2022 meeting that 'The Local Account to be updated and shared with Scrutiny Committee with a view to it being used as a performance dashboard'. Having reviewed it, it was felt that the local account would not provide a useful dashboard. It was suggested that the Chief Executive's recommendation was taken forward to provide data on the waiting lists of people waiting for a service from the Council.

Ms Fuller informed the Committee that it was no longer a requirement to produce a local account. The last one had been produced in 2014 and was therefore out of date.

Mr Hudson brought to the Committee's attention that Members had been promised at the previous meeting that they would be able to review Scrutiny protocols. He stated this had not happened because Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had established a working group in respect of democratic processes and how the Council supported Members to do their jobs. Part of the working group's remit was to focus on scrutiny and it was therefore being proposed to delay the review of the Scrutiny protocols for the time being to avoid duplication of effort.

The following action was **AGREED**:

- 1) To amend the action from the June 2022 meeting that 'The Local Account to be updated and shared with Scrutiny Committee with a view to it being used as a performance dashboard' and replace it with an emphasis on providing data on the waiting lists of people waiting for a service from the Council.

The action and recommendation tracker was **NOTED**.

24/22 CO-OPTEE RECRUITMENT UPDATE

(Agenda No. 10)

Members of the Committee received an apology for the late receipt of the report which had been awaiting the required approval.

Tom Hudson advised the Committee that there was a legal requirement enshrined within the Council's Constitution to have co-optees included as members of the Committee. The required four co-optees were two parent governors of maintained schools in Oxfordshire, one Church of England representative appointed by the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education and one Roman Catholic representative appointed jointly by the Archbishop of Birmingham and the Bishop of Portsmouth.

Current progress was that a nomination had been received from the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education. This was Ruth Bennie, the deputy director at the organisation. Mr Hudson was in contact with the Archbishop of Birmingham and the Bishop of Portsmouth in order to seek agreement on a Roman Catholic representative.

The requirement in the legislation was to hold an election amongst parent governors between those who are eligible and have put themselves forward for nomination. Mr Hudson had advertised for an election. Three people had expressed initial interest. One had not submitted the necessary paperwork, one was ineligible to stand owing to her employment by the Council and the third had a change of personal circumstances and had withdrawn from the list. The legislation stated that if the posts were not filled, an attempt must be made to fill the vacant positions in six months' time. This was scheduled to take place in March 2023.

During discussion of this item, it was noted that whilst the legislation was very prescriptive and allowed only for parent governors of maintained schools in Oxfordshire to be appointed as co-optees, there was the option to invite representatives of Oxfordshire Governors' Association to meetings as an external contributor when educational matters were being considered by the Committee. It would be raised with the Monitoring Officer whether there was any scope to amend the position so that parent governors that were not representing maintained schools would be able to sit as co-optees.

The following action was **AGREED**:

- 1) That the Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer would raise with the Monitoring Officer whether there was any scope to amend the position so that parent governors that were not representing maintained schools would be able to sit as co-optees.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) The update on activity undertaken to fill the Committee's vacant co-optee posts is noted.
- 2) That Ruth Bennie is appointed as the Anglican nomination to the Committee as co-opted member, subject to completion of the necessary formalities.
- 3) The Catholic nominee is accepted as a co-opted member to the Committee, subject to the completion of necessary formalities, without further reference to the Committee.

25/22 COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda No. 12)

Mr Hudson explained that there were updates to the Sub-Groups/Working Groups section of the Committee's Work Programme. The Food Strategy Action Plan was now scheduled for January and the Special Meeting with Regional Schools Commissioner, ESFA/OFSTED had also been delayed.

There was a discussion relating to the Education Commission. Mr Gordon advised that an independent Chair had been appointed and he recommended that she be invited to a meeting of the Committee. Members were keen that they were able to scrutinise the work of the Committee whilst the work was still evolving rather than be asked to consider the final recommendations. This would ideally include a Member of the Committee having representation on the Commission. They requested having further information on performance data in order to be as informed as possible. They noted that there was a Members' briefing being made available shortly and the terms of reference of the Commission were currently being agreed.

It was **AGREED** that in the event the Committee was represented on the Education Commission, the recommended Member would be Councillor Waine.

Mr Hudson stated that discussions had taken place regarding an all Member briefing being provided regarding Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) matters. Members looked in detail at the best forum for considering SEND matters, including whether there should be a special meeting. It was **AGREED** that the Chair and Vice-Chair would discuss with Mr Gordon outside the meeting what the most suitable forum was to achieve a productive SEND meeting and report back to Members.

It was also **AGREED** that the youth offer for Oxfordshire would be added to the January schedule. Early help would be scheduled for the March meeting.

It was requested that there was less emphasis in the People OSC meetings on lengthy presentations and that they be circulated to Members before the meeting.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing