

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 7 April 2022 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.29 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Ian Corkin – in the Chair

Councillor Kate Gregory (Deputy Chair)

Councillor Juliette Ash

Councillor Imade Edosomwan

Councillor Andy Graham

Councillor Nigel Simpson

Councillor Bethia Thomas

Councillor Michael Waine

**Other Members
in Attendance:**

Councillor Liz Brighouse, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services and Councillor Jenny Hannaby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Officers: Helen Coombes (Children's Services), Kevin Gordon (Director for Children's Services), Karen Fuller (Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Housing), Helen Mitchell (Interim Scrutiny Manager) and Khalid Ahmed (Law and Governance)

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 are attached to the signed Minutes

8/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 2)

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Hannah Banfield.

9/22 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 4)

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Michael Waine in the list of Members present.

10/22 JOSH MCALLISTER REVIEW AND AN OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL SEND REVIEW (Agenda No. 6)

The Director for Children's Services attended the meeting and informed Members that there were three reform papers to take through the legislative process:- Green Paper which was to be a consultative document, the Government White Paper which was the Government's Statement of Intent. The third was the Josh McAllister Review which had not been published. All three parts to the legislation dovetailed together.

The Committee was provided with a presentation on the National SEND Review. There were three main challenges identified:

- Navigating the SEND system and Alternative Provision (AP) which was not a positive experience for too many children, young people (CYP) and their families
- Outcomes for children, young people with SEND or in AP were consistently worse than their peers across every measure
- The current system was not financially sustainable and was unaffordable

The clear message from parents was that SEND should be met in mainstream schools.

The issues around SEND could be best summed up as a "A vicious cycle of late intervention, low confidence and inefficient resource allocation". These included:-

- Inconsistency in how needs were met – "the postcode lottery"
- Early years and mainstream were ill-equipped to identify and support CYP
- Expectations of mainstream settings unclear – parents lose confidence and see EHC Plans and special schools as the 'solution'
- Long journeys to school or attending a placement outside of the local area
- Financial resource and workforce capacity was pulled to the specialist end of the system – less available for early intervention and effective, timely support in mainstream settings
- Increasing requests for EHC Plans and specialist provision

Members were informed that the solution was for SEND to become more efficient which would take time. To turn things around the following needed to happen:-

- Most CYP could access the support they needed in their local mainstream setting with needs identified promptly and appropriate support at the earliest opportunity
- For those who needed specialist provision, it should be accessed with minimal bureaucracy
- Greater national consistency on what should be ordinarily available and how it was funded
- Strong co-production with families and accountability at every level
- Improved data collection to give a timely picture of how the system was performing

Proposal 1 was for a single national SEND and alternative provision system.

- Establishing a national SEND AP system with consistent standards for how needs were identified
- An Inclusion Plan developed by a new local SEND partnership consisting education, health, care and local government
- A tailored list of settings (mainstream, special, independent) so that parent-carers can express an informed preference
- A standardised and digitised EHCP process and template
- Resolve disputes earlier including mandatory mediation

Reference was made to Oxfordshire's strong partnerships and that the aspiration was to have a standardised approach to SEND.

Members were informed that the SEND Tribunal system had its limitations, and the system was too bureaucratic. Reference was made to a SEND Partnership Board for Oxfordshire comprising of the SEND service, Social Care, Health partners and representatives of parents and carers who wrote the SEND strategy. The Director of Children's Services reported that there were other groups and panels who looked at case work etc and it was agreed that more information on these be circulated.

Proposal 2 was to provide excellent provision from early years to adulthood:-

- An additional £1 billion for schools in 2022 to 2023
- Improved Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers
- A new SENCo national professional qualification
- £2.6 billion over 3 years for new specialist and AP places and improving existing provision
- More new special and AP free schools
- By 2030, all children and young people would be taught in a MAT
- £18 million to build capacity in the supported internships programme
- Common transfer files/adjustment passports to ensure YP with SEND are prepared for employment and higher education
- A clear focus on SEND in health workforce planning
- Additional respite placements

The Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services expressed her concern at the cost implications of this training, particularly for small schools and the impact of the current cost of living and energy crisis on budgets. She commented that funding for the personal development of teachers should be held by schools.

Proposal 3 – A reformed and integrated role for alternative provision for when children cannot attend mainstream schools:-

- Make AP an integral part of local SEND systems by requiring the new SEND partnerships to plan and deliver an AP service focused on early intervention

- Give AP schools the funding stability to deliver a service focused on early intervention by requiring LAs to create and distribute an AP specific budget
- A performance framework for AP focusing on progress, re-integration into mainstream or sustainable post-16 destinations
- Greater oversight and transparency on CYP movements into and out of AP

The Director of Children's Services reported that it was hoped that the Government would be changing the funding around Alternative Provision.

Proposal 4 - System roles, accountabilities and funding reform:-

- Clarity on roles and responsibilities for all partners via new national standards
- DfE to hold LAs and trusts to account for delivering for CYP with SEND locally
- An inclusion dashboard of how the system is performing at a local and national level across education, health and care
- An updated local area SEND inspection framework
- A national funding framework of banding and price tariffs, matched to levels of need and types of education provision

The Committee was provided with details of the White Paper, "Opportunity for All: Strong Schools with Great Teachers for Your Child". Included in this was:-

- 500,000 teacher training and development opportunities by 2024, giving all teachers and school leaders access to world-class, evidence-based training and professional development at every stage of their career.
- Specialist training to drive better literacy through a new National Professional Qualification for Leading Literacy; a new National Professional Qualification for Early Years Leadership; and up to £180 million investment in the early years workforce, including training for early years practitioners to support literacy and numeracy teaching.
- £30,000 starting salaries to attract and retain the very best teachers – with additional incentives to work in the schools with the most need.
- A new arms-length curriculum body that works with teachers across the country to co-create free, optional, adaptable digital curriculum resources, supporting schools to deliver rigorous, high-quality curricula.
- A richer, longer average school week which makes the most effective use of time in school and ensures children enjoy a rounded education.
- Better behaviour and higher attendance through more effective use of data, including an annual behaviour survey and a national data system, to drive up attendance and make it easier for agencies to protect vulnerable children.
- A Parent Pledge that your school will provide evidence-based support if your child falls behind in English or maths and tell you about their progress.
- Up to 6 million tutoring courses by 2024 with action to cement one-to-one and small group tuition as a permanent feature of our school system.
- A secure future for the Education Endowment Foundation putting our independent 'what works' centre on a long-term footing and placing the generation and mobilisation of evidence at the heart of our education system.
- A fully trust led system with a single regulatory approach, which will drive up standards, through the growth of strong trusts and the establishment of new ones, including trusts established by local authorities.

- A clear role for every part of the school system, with local authorities empowered to champion the interests of children and a new collaborative standard requiring trusts to work constructively with all other partners.
- Education Investment Areas to increase funding and support to areas in most need, plus extra funding in priority areas facing the most entrenched challenges.

Issues raised by Members

- In response to a question about what should be in the review, the Director for Children's Services commented that there should have been greater appreciation of the work carried out by schools during the Pandemic. There were high levels of complex needs which necessitated more staff in classrooms. All teachers should be a teacher of SEND.
- Teacher SEND training – A comment was made that SEND should be part of all teacher training, early in the system.
- In relation to a fully trust led system, Oxfordshire had 130 maintained schools. What role would the local authority have in this system? There needed to be more information of where Oxfordshire was in relation to maintained schools and the impact the proposals would have.
- Rural schools – these schools were different but would be treated the same. Geography created opportunities but also difficulties.
- The Schools Commissioner would have an accountability role on a regional basis.
- Reference was made to the need for transparency of the data. The main objective of the data was to help in the monitoring of change. There was a need to explain the data for parents.
- Equity was important and what it meant in terms of resources, positive narrative on local data on informing the Regional Commissioner. Alternative Provision was important as an intervention.
- Targeted funding – the importance of “pump priming” of funding and having a view of the base line was stressed.
- Local authority led community trusts in relation to small schools.
- SEND training for teachers needed to be an integral part of all teacher training.
- A community approach – how was the Youth Service linked and joined up in the process.

RESOLVED – That the Committee noted the presentation given on the overview of the National SEND Review and on national policy updates and their potential implications for Oxfordshire.

11/22 OXFORDSHIRE ADULTS SERVICES

(Agenda No. 7)

Councillor Jenny Hannaby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Karen Fuller, Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Housing attended the meeting and provided an overview of adult services in Oxfordshire, the adult social care market and delivery.

The report provided details of what Adult services aimed to achieve, how services were delivered and how quality of provision and service user satisfaction were measured.

An overview of the Adult social care market was provided, together with concerns about the market's long-term stability, sustainability, and viability. Details of upcoming legislation in the context of the national reform of the health and social care sector was provided, together with an overview of finances, and key risks identified.

Reference was made to the impact of the Pandemic in terms of the operation of the service and the impact on users. At the centre of this transformation programme was the vision: "We want the people of Oxfordshire to live well in their community, remaining fit and healthy for as long as possible".

The delivery of this vision the Oxfordshire Way was about providing people with the ability to support themselves through personal, local and system assets to 'keep them in the centre'. In collaboration with communities, voluntary sector, and other system partners people would be supported, who were aged over 18 (from the age of 16 for people transitioning from children's services) to lead independent lives.

Preparations were being made by the local authority in relation to the 2021 Health and Social Care Bill.

Issues raised by Members

- Reference was made to performance and comparison data with Oxfordshire performing well on the framework, being in the top quartile on over half of the measures. In relation to things which were not going well, the Committee was reassured that improvements were being made on people who were fully independent after reablement and those discharged from hospital who were still at home 3 months later.
- Discussion took place on the impact of Covid and the difficulties this caused for the service and to users such as accessing Primary Care services such as GPs.
- There were concerns regarding the challenges of recruitment, which was a national issue, together with a backlog of assessments, although these were reducing. There were currently 1940 outstanding people who had not had a review in the last 12 months, however, the Pandemic had caused the review team to be reassigned to support the covid response. The average wait was 2 years, with the majority seen within 12 months.
- There were particular concerns with areas of deprivation and Officers said they could provide statistics on this.
- The contribution of the voluntary sector and communities could not be underestimated.
- The market for adult social care was fragile with rising costs and the cost of living crisis.
- A reorganisation of Commissioning involved a new framework for homecare which had attracted new providers. A report on this would be submitted to a future meeting.

- What could be done to help carers in relation to the increased costs of travel? Electric cars, the use of bicycles and other transport opportunities.
- On preparations for Adulthood, the recommendations were for the young person and family to have a named worker, adopt case management model, start planning earlier and focus on outcomes. Reference was made for the need for a single point of contact, to ensure each school and college had a link person to identify people earlier.

RESOLVED – (1) That the information contained in the report be noted.

(2) That Councillor Hannaby and the Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Housing be thanked for the work which has been carried out in Adult Services and the thanks of this Committee be passed onto the staff who worked so hard during the Pandemic.

12/22 STATUTORY CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 8)

A report was submitted on proposals for the appointment of statutory consultees on this Committee.

Under the Education Act 1996, provision was made for statutory consultees to sit and vote on education matters. As Councils moved to executive arrangements under the Local Government Act 2000 (the Act), that requirement moved to the Scrutiny Committee that dealt with such matters. At Oxfordshire, that is the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Discussion took place on other possible co-optees being appointed to the Committee, such as from the voluntary sector, to be involved in other areas covered within the remit of this Committee.

It was agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the possible co-option of a group of stakeholders who could help the Committee with scrutiny reviews.

RESOLVED – (1) That officers be asked to make preparations for the co-option of statutory consultees on the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(2) That officers be asked to submit a report to a future meeting on the possible co-option of a group of stakeholders to the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee who could help the Committee with scrutiny reviews.

(3) That where required the Constitution Working Group considers the Committee's request to broaden its co-option rights within the Council's Constitution.

13/22 APPROACH TO WORK PROGRAMMING 2022/23

(Agenda No. 9)

A discussion took place on the approach to be taken to this Committee's work programme for 2022/23.

A number of possible work programme items were raised:

- Youth Services
- Covid – What did Schools learn?

Members were asked to share ideas and have conversations with relevant Cabinet Members on possible review topics which could be included in the Committee's work programme.

The information reported was noted.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing