

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 16 March 2017 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.00 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE – in the Chair

Councillor Janet Godden (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Sam Coates
Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE
Councillor Patrick Greene
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Stewart Lilly
Councillor Sandy Lovatt
Councillor John Sanders

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Judith Heathcoat (for Agenda Item 5)
Councillor Melinda Tilley (for Agenda Items 7 to 11)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Steven Jones, Corporate Performance and Risk Manager; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Committee Officer

Part of meeting

Agenda Item	Officer Attending
5	Ian Dyson, Assistant Chief Finance Officer (Assurance) Val Messenger, Deputy Director for Public Health
6	Maggie Scott, Assistant Chief Executive
7, 8 & 9	Lucy Butler, Director for Children's Services; Hannah Farncombe, Deputy Director for Children's Social Care; Lara Patel, Deputy Director – Safeguarding
8	Daniel Ruaux, Strategic Lead for Missing Children

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda, reports and additional documents are attached to the signed Minutes.

13/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Charles Mathew and Councillor Mark Gray. No substitutes were appointed.

14/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - GUIDANCE NOTE ON BACK PAGE OF THE AGENDA
(Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

15/17 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 5 January 2017 and 9 March 2017 were approved and signed as a correct record.

Councillors Constance and Green reported that delays in the release of Section 106 payments were still occurring. It was agreed to add this to the forward plan for scheduling in the next few months.

16/17 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 3 2016/17
(Agenda No. 5)

Mr Jones summarised the report which applied to the period up to 31 December 2016. The report was cautiously positive indicating that the Council was on target to meet the three strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Plan.

Members raised the following issues:

- Asked why the compilation of the report is still quite labour-intensive, Mr Dyson responded that much of the work involves manual collation. The digital platform being introduced as part of Transformation will allow the different systems to share data automatically. Members asked for a quarterly update on progress and this was added to the forward plan.
- Asked if 'open data' principles were being followed in the development of the digital platform Mr Dyson responded that he would take that question back to the Business Intelligence team.
- Members asked for information to enable them to judge if the local economy is thriving or not in order to be able assess the performance of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP). It was agreed that a seminar on the economy would be useful for new councillors after the coming election , and that officers would raise this proposal with the Strategic Director for Communities.
- Members welcomed the improvement with regard to Delayed Transfers of Care but asked if the problem had been moved on elsewhere. Councillor Heathcoat attributed the improvement to successful teamwork with the partnerships involved. As Cabinet member she gets data on Adult Social Care every Thursday and Members can receive the data if they ask for it.
- Concern was expressed at the increase in the number of permanent exclusions from Oxfordshire schools. The Chairman responded that a report was needed showing which schools were excluding and which schools were accepting excluded students.

- Asked how officers judge that a former client was drugs free, Ms Messenger responded that there were two factors: firstly agreement with the individual at the completion of their service and secondly if they do not detect any related activity for the person in the following six months.

17/17 DRAFT SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

(Agenda No. 6)

Ms Scott introduced the report and explained that it had been compiled by officers in conjunction with Scrutiny Committee Chairmen.

Members asked for the following amendments:

- That the report should reflect Members' dissatisfaction with the item with the Police and Crime Commissioner who did not present a written report to the Committee.
- The meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel referred to in paragraph 2.20 was in January.

Ms Scott undertook to update the draft accordingly, to include matters from the March meetings and to recirculate to Committee Chairmen for final agreement before sending the report to Council.

18/17 CHILDREN'S SERVICES

(Agenda No. 7)

Ms Butler delivered an oral report to the meeting. She reminded Members that she was now part of the 'People' Directorate. Two new services just started on 1 March, the Locality and Community Support Service and the Family Solutions Service (which includes Early Help and CSC Family Support). It is too early to assess them. Overall, activity levels are skyrocketing.

A review of 10% of Looked After Children (LAC) cases has identified some key issues aimed at reducing the number of LACs. There is a need to focus on relationship-based work, restorative practices, case loads and educational attainment.

Members of the Senior Management Group are going to spend a week on the front line to see practices for themselves and support workers in their difficult roles.

Members raised various issues and the officers and Cabinet member responded:

- Regarding cooperation with schools, there are now 20 staff in the new Locality and Community Support Service so that each school has a named worker whether an academy or maintained school.
- Three community coordinators are in place to work with community groups to keep extra centres open.
- The best frameworks have restorative systems, try to avoid changes of social worker and work on families' strengths.

- On the increasing number of school exclusions, this is seen especially at secondary level and mostly in academies but it is a national issue. The Police have offered closer coordination with their officers.
- It is hoped that the review of LAC cases, examining who intervened when for example, will help develop more preventative measures.
- There are fortnightly meetings reviewing high cost LAC placements, collating themes and identifying gaps.
- Officers try to place locally, near support networks, but sometimes there is a need to move away. Not many LACs required secure units – perhaps 2 per year.
- It was agreed that new councillors elected in May will need training on corporate parenting.
- Also a communications plan is needed to let the public know of the positive progress in children’s services.

19/17 CHILDREN MISSING FROM HOME AND CARE IN OXFORDSHIRE

(Agenda No. 8)

Mr Ruaux summarised the report. The Missing Children Panel is of the view that increases in the number of children being reported missing for the first time is attributable to improved reporting. The reduction in repeat missing episodes, despite the increasing Looked After Children (LAC) population, indicates that we are managing this more effectively.

Officers responded to questions from Members:

- School attendance and educational attainment are important factors for children at risk of involvement in drugs or crime.
- Once agencies become involved with a child, organised crime gangs tend to back off.
- Three percent of missing cases are related to bullying in general – there is no separate figure for cyber bullying. The most effective approach is to focus on welfare rather than the illegality.
- Return interviews are the second most critical part of a case and in one case led to a conviction.
- Often social care issues are at the centre and we need to look at cross body practices.

20/17 OVERVIEW OF OCC RESPONSE TO SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS

(Agenda No. 9)

Ms Patel summarised the report which covered 6 Serious Case Reviews of which 4 have concluded. The issues that arose were broadly similar to other SCRs and the national picture. The reviews reinforced the importance of following safeguarding processes thoroughly and of challenging the assumption that adolescents have the capacity to protect themselves.

Members raised a number of issues and officers responded as follows:

- Nationally and locally, the highest levels of risk involved drug/alcohol abuse, mental health and domestic abuse.
- Services have a duty to work with young adults up to the age of 21, when care leavers, but an adult can reject help when over 18.
- Staff can check beyond self-reported information by getting information from other family members, colleagues and the health services for example.

The Chairman asked that cases be brought to the Committee as they come up in order to look at the issues and actions arising.

21/17 EXEMPT INFORMATION

(Agenda No. 10)

RESOLVED: to agree that the public be excluded during the consideration of the annex since it is likely that if they were present during that discussion there would be a disclosure of “exempt” information as described in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and specified below the item in the Agenda.

PUBLIC SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS FOLLOWING THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.

22/17 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN - THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

(Agenda No. 11)

The information contained in the annex to the report is exempt in that it falls within the following prescribed category:

3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information);

and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, in that disclosure would distort the proper process of open competition and would prejudice the position of the authority in the process of the transaction and the Council’s standing generally in relation to such transactions in future, to the detriment of the Council’s ability properly to discharge its fiduciary and other duties as a public authority.

Councillor Godden summarised the report on the meeting with the Corporate Parenting Panel. With regard to the delays in delivering the Council’s four new children’s homes, Councillors were satisfied that matters are being pursued as far and as fast as they can be.

Activity levels around Child Protection plans remain high but it is thought that this is due to increased reporting rather than increasing levels of ill-treatment.

Councillor Tilley welcomed the attendance of councillors at the Panel meeting and emphasised that all councillors are welcome to attend but meetings are not open to members of the public.

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Councillor Godden reported that

- councillors were happy that they received full answers on the questions of pressures on the service and the overspend.
- there was no sign of a plateau in demand yet.
- she is not happy with the distinction whereby the Audit and Governance Committees look at risk management and processes in the service whereas the Performance Scrutiny Committee looks at the outcomes.

The Chairman recommended that new councillors elected in May should be well briefed on corporate parenting.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 200