

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 12 November 2020 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.45 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE – in the Chair

Councillor Jenny Hannaby (Deputy Chairman)

Councillor Nick Carter

Councillor Mike Fox-Davies

Councillor Tony Ilott

Councillor Liz Leffman

Councillor Jeannette Matelot

Councillor Charles Mathew

Councillor Glynis Phillips

Councillor Judy Roberts

Councillor Michael Waine

By Invitation: John Campbell, Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police;
Matthew Barber, Deputy Police and Crime
Commissioner

Officers:

Whole of meeting Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate
Programmes; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Committee Officer

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

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Officer Attending

Lara Patel, Deputy Director – Safeguarding

Hannah Farncombe, Deputy Director – Children’s Social
Care

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.

46/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

There were no apologies.

47/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - GUIDANCE NOTE ON BACK PAGE OF THE AGENDA

(Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

48/20 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2020 were approved and signed.

On Item 39/20, Councillor Charles Mathew reported that he had received the data on Education, Health and Care Plans from Children's Services and it would be circulated to Members of the Committee shortly.

**49/20 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER AND THE THAMES VALLEY
POLICE DELIVERY PLAN 2020-21**
(Agenda No. 5)

John Campbell, Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, gave the presentation on the Strategic Plan 2020/21. He then invited questions for himself or for the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Barber.

Councillor Tony Ilott asked if it was necessary to have a degree to become a constable. The Chief Constable clarified that recruits join as apprentices and gain a degree as part of the training process.

Councillor Liz Leffman asked if the recent extra £8.4m from the precept was to be spent entirely on recruitment and how it related to the £13.4m in savings that need to be made over the next three years.

John Campbell responded that the £8.4m would be invested in recruitment and that the savings would have to be found from their budget. They will work with the Police and Crime Commissioner on mitigating effects of the savings. They have previously taken £109m out of the budget over 9 years. He did not anticipate any reductions in the number of officers as the service was quite lean already.

Matthew Barber added that increased use of drones would reduce the need for expensive helicopters and they would also look at police property that was not public-facing as increased working from home is reducing the need for office space.

Members raised issues related to unauthorised encampments, speeding and the need for more action against illegal parking until the Civil Parking Enforcement system comes in. Matthew Barber responded that new legislation coming in a Bill on police powers in the New Year will include measures on unauthorised encampments. There will be a new pilot as part of a relaunch of Community Speedwatch and they are looking at ways of feeding the information into police and highways systems.

Councillor Jenny Hannaby noted that some of the figures in the presentation were just percentages without the total numbers. The Chief Constable agreed to provide more detailed figures.

Councillor Hannaby also asked for more information on the independent group that reviews Stop and Search, what measures are taken to protect police from attacks and how that is balanced against the need for face-to-face contact which is important in terms of public confidence.

John Campbell responded that the advisory group was chaired by a member of the public and sits under the Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing. Police officers are trained in self-defence and de-escalation techniques as well as being equipped with PPE and an increase in the availability of tasers.

Matthew Barber added that he recognised the importance of police officers being out in the community especially given the fact that very few members of the public visit police stations.

Councillor Nick Carter asked if the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) will also increase as part of the current recruitment drive and if the same level of energy that was put into Operation Bullfinch is still being applied in the partnership that was set up in the aftermath.

The Chief Constable replied that PCSOs are funded from the general budget and he did not see the numbers increasing. They were currently under number and he hoped that they could recruit more people who would commit to be PCSOs rather than seeing it as a step into the main police force.

The Kingfisher Team that was set up following Operation Bullfinch is still in place and dealing with historic child sexual exploitation cases but also looking into more general areas of exploitation now. The key thing is that there is now a system in place dealing with any kind of exploitation that might emerge.

Councillor Glynis Phillips asked if there had been any deaths in custody and, if so, what was the racial profile. John Campbell responded that there had been one death in custody in the last year at Loddon Valley in Berkshire. The person had a BAME background and it has been referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

Councillor Judy Roberts asked if the website for reporting scams and dealing with parking fines could be improved as she felt that more people were calling 111 because they found the website too difficult. She also asked for an update on rural crime which was not mentioned in the presentation.

The Chief Constable replied that the website was provided nationally but he would take the feedback. He appreciated that, while rural crime in the county was relatively low, the impact was often greater given the sense of isolation. The Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing chairs the strategic group on rural crime and is ensuring that there will be a minimum of five operations per year in each local policing area.

Matthew Barber added that WhatsApp groups had been quite effective in rural areas, leading to arrests in some cases. Recent statistics had shown that, while the number of crimes went down this year, the value of what was stolen has increased.

Councillor Michael Waine raised the problem of drug dealing on bikes and the perception that very little is being done about it. He also asked for more detail on what range of resolutions constitute “positive outcomes” as referred to in the presentation.

John Campbell responded that people should always report incidents but officers have to make decisions that depend on what else is going on at the time. However, even if they cannot respond to an individual case that report helps to build a profile for an area which can inform decisions on future patrolling.

Positive outcomes include community resolutions, cautions or charges. There are options other than criminal prosecutions which used not to go into the figures but they can often be in the interest of the victim who may be satisfied with an acknowledgement of the crime.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Constable and the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for attending and responding to questions and for all the work that the police service does especially under the extra pressures brought on by the pandemic.

50/20 SAFEGUARDING MISSING CHILDREN

(Agenda No. 6)

Lara Patel introduced the report which covers the period 1 January to 30 June 2020. She responded to issues raised by Members as follows:

- Exploitation is often a concern when children go missing. The Head of Service for the new Youth Justice and Exploitation Service will be the Strategic Lead for Missing Children.
- When they go missing it is often to a friend’s house or it could be a public park. There are a proportion who will go to people or places where they are at risk. If a child is missing for more than 24 hours there will be a meeting with relevant partners and that will be repeated if the absence continues. This ensures escalation where there are particular concerns and decisions can be made, for example to make a media appeal or ask the police to seek information on phone or account activity.
- It is unusual for a child not to be found but it does happen. The cohort of children among whom that would be more likely to happen would be unaccompanied asylum seekers and could be linked to trafficking or an unsuccessful application and fear of repatriation.
- When children are placed out of county the reason for their going missing can often be that they want to see people from home. It reinforces the need to be able to provide sufficient accommodation for placements in county when appropriate.
- The Council does not have exclusive rights to the places available with independent providers in the county. They may take placements from outside the county but the council works with them to try to place as many of our own children in county.
- It is essential that return interviews are conducted which is why that percentage is a performance indicator and is monitored weekly. It will never be 100% because there can be a valid reason for not interviewing in a few cases.

- Independent accommodation for post-16s is not required to be registered unless a child has a specific care need. However, there is close monitoring of such provision with the partner-providers including any placed out of county. If there are media reports of problems with a provider then the council will immediately check if it has any children placed with them. There is a panel chaired by the safeguarding lead that looks at any issues arising out of placements.

The Chairman thanked officers for the report and for all the work that they do for children in care.

51/20 IMPLEMENTING THE FAMILY SAFEGUARDING MODEL

(Agenda No. 7)

Hannah Farncombe introduced the presentation. The new family safeguarding model went live the last weekend of October and they were ready to offer the service from Monday 2 November.

Following the presentation Hannah Farncombe took questions from Members and responded as follows:

- There is no plan to increase funding for parenting groups but neither is there any intention to reduce it. The groups play an important part in the model.
- The number of teams was reduced from the planned 22 down to 17 in order to provide assistant team managers. So the teams are bigger by one but get additional support.
- Training is provided on Family Links and the model also links to schools and practitioners that use Family Links which helps to build capacity.

Members congratulated officers and the Cabinet for seeing this through with the budget it needs. Councillor Glynis Phillips hoped that the Cherwell pilot could be expanded across the county.

The Chairman thanked all the members of staff who had to go through the changes and had to think of new ways of working.

Hannah Farncombe concluded by saying that she would ensure that the comments were reflected in the next staff newsletter.

52/20 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING REPORT

(Agenda No. 8)

Louise Tustian summarised the report and responded to questions that had been submitted in advance as follows:

- On the proposed cycling and pedestrian analysis and the timeline for when new analysis will be available, the proposal to look at a more real time / focused approach to reporting on cycle use, targeted at specific towns, will be included in next year's business plan which is now being prioritised. An up to date position on this year's aggregate target should be available in the next couple of months.

- Regarding the investment required for delivering Education Health and Care Plans, the response was quite detailed and will be emailed to Members of the Committee. It should be noted that over the last five years, the number of EHCPs (aged 0-25) issued per year in Oxfordshire has trebled, from 232 to 706 (an increase of 204%) This increase has been predominantly in the primary school age group and in the white ethnic group.
- On High Needs issues, the Committee requested a timeline for when this will come back to Education Scrutiny. The response was that, because of the scale of the project, it would be expected that updates will be provided on a regular basis to the Education Scrutiny Committee.
- The Director for Public Health has responded that the funding for test and trace is money to be shared across the system to tackle COVID-19 in line with the local outbreak plan as agreed by the Health Protection Board partners. The spending of this is monitored by the Health Protection Board.
- A response on the subject of a strategy for hiring consultants had not yet been received but will be circulated to Members.

Members asked for more information on the following:

- Details on the new scheme for Delayed Transfers of Care, how it differs from the old scheme and what happens if a care package is not in place at the end of the six-week care period.
- When an improvement will be seen with FixMyStreet.
- Why indicator 19 “People needing short-term support can access an effective service” was not assessed.

Councillor Charles Mathew asked who decides on the parameters for the RAG ratings and what the rating should be.

Louise Tustian responded that the decisions are made within the services and they are part of the original performance framework and that will be reviewed when the Committee looks at the business plan and performance framework for next year. The Chairman added that they also need to see how they can follow up on issues raised by this Committee at Cabinet to ensure that actions have been taken.

Councillor Michael Waine noted that schools should be congratulated for the attendance figures that have been achieved on the return to school under COVID-19 which are well above the national average. His understanding is that, if a child is at home self-isolating, they are recorded as in contact with the school as long as they are using the online learning platform.

53/20 WORK PROGRAMME

(Agenda No. 9)

The following additions to meetings on the Work Programme were agreed:

14 January 2021

Two Serious Case Reviews

11 March 2021

Progress towards climate change targets

Staff turnover and retention
Minerals and Waste Strategy

Two items were removed from the “To be scheduled” list as they will be dealt with by the Audit & Governance Committee:

COVID-19 response: digital democracy

The Council’s role as an accountable body.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 20