

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 10 September 2020 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.20 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

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Mark Grey (for Agenda Item 6)

By Invitation: Richard Simpson, Independent Chair, Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (for Agenda Item 7)

Officers:

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

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

	Officer Attending
6	Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development; Sam Shepherd, Policy Team Leader; Elena Grant, National Management Trainee
7	Lara Patel, Deputy Director – Safeguarding; Tan Lea – Strategic Safeguarding Partnerships Manager
8	Karen Fuller, Deputy Director Adult Social Care; Melanie Pearce, Service Manager Safeguarding
9	Grahame Mitchell, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

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.

37/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 1)

There were no apologies.

38/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - GUIDANCE NOTE ON BACK PAGE OF THE AGENDA
(Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

39/20 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 July 2020, 30 July 2020 and 13 August 2020 were approved and signed.

On Item 28/20, Councillor Nick Carter noted that he had not received the requested data on Education, Health and Care Plans. Councillor Charles Mathew reported that he had had discussions with the Director for Children's Services on the matter and expected the data would be available soon. The Chairman asked for it to be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

On Item 33/20, Councillor Jenny Hannaby noted that Members had not received information on the Science Vale cycle scheme as promised and asked for that request to be followed up on.

On Item 36/20, Councillor Michael Waine noted that he is still pursuing an answer regarding delays in road maintenance.

40/20 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING REPORT - JULY
(Agenda No. 5)

Louise Tustian introduced the report. She noted one indicator movement from Green to Amber for "Support for a strong local economy". One Red indicator remains from the previous report around infrastructure delivery support. That is linked to a change in a Leadership Risk (LR3) which is now more focused on that issue. Overall the Council is in a strong position given the current Covid-19 situation.

Members raised a number of points as set out below and it was AGREED that officers will provide responses to be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

Councillor Glynis Phillips asked

- for figures on the lower number of care home admissions (Agenda Page 26, fourth bullet point) and officers' views on the future of care homes if the trend continues.

PSC3

- for the figures for trees planted by highways, whether replacing dead trees or planting new ones, given the Council's carbon commitments.
- for clarification on the percentages referred to in indicator 26 and if it means that 10% of the Council's own works on potholes are defective.
- if it would be better to say that figures are not available rather than include end of year forecasts under indicator 13 – household waste percentages.
- if the figure of 300 EV charging points, under indicator 11, refers to the whole county.

Councillor Charles Mathew asked that the original budget figures be included so that comparisons can be made to those figures and not just the revised budget figures.

Councillor Michael Waine asked for an update on the extra costs for school transport given the changes for Covid-19, what support will be forthcoming from central government and the shortfall.

He also noted that the Skanska subcontractor responsible for micro-asphalting is not operating and asked what would be the saving from that and what will happen to that budget. He asked if it would be transferred to next year so that the Council does not fall behind on that work.

Councillor Judy Roberts asked for information on new posts referred to under LR3. Infrastructure delivery impacts on the Growth Deal and many projects across the county and Members need to know who to go to with their queries.

The Chairman thanked officers for the report and asked that consideration be given to increase the font size in future reports to make them more accessible.

41/20 INCLUDING EVERYONE: EQUALITIES, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FRAMEWORK (Agenda No. 6)

Councillor Mark Grey introduced the report. He outlined how OCC goes further than the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in taking into account social and rural deprivation, carers and the armed forces. The importance of the issues has been highlighted by the Black Lives Matter campaign, the Covid-19 pandemic and recent reports on health inequalities. A joint approach is being taken with Cherwell District Council but the two councils will have their own action plans.

Elena Grant gave examples of the evidence base which will inform the Council's policies. Information has come from discussion groups, a data pack about equalities in our communities and HR equalities data. The final document will be accompanied by the data pack.

Samantha Shepherd gave a presentation in which she outlined the process being followed. It is planned to bring an action plan to the October Cabinet meeting. That will be followed by a wider engagement with stakeholders and the public.

Claire Taylor emphasised that the document before them was a draft. Officers were very keen to hear views from councillors, especially to ensure that local communities were reflected in the document. Officers were also aware that in some cases there are multiple impacts where characteristics are combined.

Councillor Tony Ilott asked what definition of poverty was being used. Councillor Grey responded that the measure for a child in poverty was being in a family with income below 60% of the UK average adjusted for family size.

Members suggested

- that the actions the Council can take as an employer or as a service provider be separated out.
- that it be made clearer where people can take complaints.
- that attention be given to rural deprivation given that 51% of the population lives in a rural setting.
- to ensure that those who are not so skilled at computers are still catered for.
- the need for a councillor champion.
- the Council can also be an influencer, for example with schools where there can be unconscious discrimination in out-of-school activities which are often unaffordable for some families.
- similarly, there can be issues accessing day centres and transport in general for those with mobility impairments.
- a seminar on the framework for all Members would be welcome.

Members also raised the following points which will be responded to by officers afterwards:

- How many unpaid carers are children?
- Has it ever been calculated how much cost young carers save the Council which would have to step in if they were not there?
- In relation to the figures for top first languages, how many primary school children are there in total in the county and could the same figures be made available for secondary schools?

Councillor Grey thanked officers for their work on the framework and thanked Members for their feedback. He concluded, stating that equality of opportunity will always be central to this.

42/20 OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORTS (Agenda No. 7)

Richard Simpson introduced the report. He stated that it had been an honour and a privilege to serve as Independent Chair but he had to step down from the position.

The Chairman thanked him for his service. She added that it had been very helpful having a Chair who worked for Barnardo's and she hoped that the organisation might be able to provide the next chair too. Richard Simpson responded that he would be available to ensure a seamless transition.

PSC3

He emphasised that the report was dealing with the period pre-Covid-19. He thanked the OSCB Business Unit, and especially Kay Bishop, for compiling the report.

He highlighted a number of points from the report. He was very happy with the senior involvement of police and County Council in the partnership. The focus on the importance of school attendance was very welcome.

Their conference had been very child-centred but he was aware that more needed to be done towards greater involvement of children in setting the strategy. For the third year running they had provided around 10,000 training places and a new initiative to invite commendations for safeguarding work had been really appreciated.

He felt that more needed to be done to tackle neglect. There were too many Child Protection Plans resulting from neglect. OSCB also needs to respond to a criticism from Ofsted regarding some organisations not being properly represented at case conferences.

The immediate challenge will be in getting children back to school post-Covid. That needs to be watched closely and there are concerns regarding home education where the local authority has very little in the way of powers.

Tan Lea summarised the report and conclusions of the PAQA subgroup. They know that they need to keep on seeking to include the child's voice. They are aware of the importance of dealing with whole families but also the needs of the individual. The workload is complex and there is a real need to support the workforce in this. The Committee last year asked for a matrix of common themes from the work which has been provided in the Appendix. The top issues were managing demand especially in Mental Health, knife crime and exploitation, the importance of schools in keeping children safe and attendance at case conferences.

Lara Patel summarised the CRAG report. Two of the six current Serious Case Reviews have concluded. One has already been before the Committee. For the other, the communications plan is still being finalised but it is expected to bring it before the Committee by the end of the year. CRAG contributed to a national review focussed on exploitation and the learning from that review will help inform the development of a new youth justice and exploitation service which will go live in November. The Family Solutions Plus service, also starting in November, will have an additional focus on parental mental health, domestic abuse and drug and alcohol abuse issues.

Members expressed regret that the Independent Chair had to step down from the role and they raised issues which Richard Simpson and the officers responded to as follows:

- The main challenge for partners will be the demand for statutory services versus the cuts that are coming down the line. They need to work more closely together and pool resources to meet that challenge,
- If the government plan to provide mental health support in schools comes through that will help reduce demand on CAMHS by tackling issues earlier.

- The Church of England Bishop asked to be involved and it was agreed that his representative should join the Safeguarding in Education Subgroup.
- County Lines is still a growing problem. It is important to work with the children involved but there is also a need to get to the actual drug dealers who are causing the problem.
- Young Carers are recognised as a vulnerable group. This year's Public Health audit focussed on them and PAQA will now look at how the champion model in schools is working.
- The return to school post-Covid will have to be watched closely. There has been a lot of scenario planning and communications with schools.

The Chairman asked if the Education Scrutiny Committee could pick up on the last point. Councillor Michael Waine, Chair of the Education Scrutiny Committee, agreed to that and stated that he had already had a very useful first meeting with the new Director for Children's Services.

The Chairman thanked the Independent Chair and officers for an excellent report. She stated that Richard Simpson had made progress in Children's Safeguarding in Oxfordshire in his period of office and Members thanked him for that.

43/20 OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda No. 8)

Karen Fuller presented the report in the absence of Dr Sue Ross who was unable to attend for personal reasons. She thanked Melanie Pearce and Steve Turner for their work on the report.

Despite the pandemic, 95% of staff are up to date on training. All training has been made available online and this has been particularly useful to voluntary groups including those that emerged in response to Covid-19.

Healthwatch conducted a secret-shopper exercise on behalf of the Board which revealed that the 'shoppers' struggled to make a safeguarding referral. Changes have been made to the website based on the learning from that.

Three priorities have been identified with partners: people who do not meet the threshold for support, the challenge of information sharing and increasing complexity of cases. Also, the impact of Covid is still unknown.

The Board commissioned an independent report on the seven deaths of homeless individuals. A Task and Finish Group will be set up to look at the learning from that.

The following are the responses of officers to issues raised by Members:

- Discrimination abuse (Agenda Page 10) refers to abuse relating to an equality characteristic, for example LGBT. It is a requirement to report on this figure.
- Feedback that the report is light on background details and data will be taken on board with next year's report along with the specific request for information on repeat safeguarding cases.

- With regard to support for homeless people during the pandemic, some chose not to accept accommodation, some of those who did have left but some remain and work is ongoing with housing departments to find more long-term solutions for them.
- Two of the Safeguarding Adult Reviews relate to people who were receiving services – one through the mental health team and one through a locality team.
- The 41% of abuse in the category of neglect may have multiple factors. Generally, a Care Act assessment is recommended and that person or their carer is supported in minimising neglect.
- The percentages on Agenda Page 10 are a breakdown of the number of safeguarding concerns raised (5116).

The Chairman thanked officers for the report which will help the Committee to identify any issues that may need a closer look in which case they will be added to the work programme.

44/20 COMMUNITY SAFETY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda No. 9)

Grahame Mitchell summarised the report. He highlighted that there had been 900 applications received to their first recruitment drive for years. The number of female firefighters has increased from 38 to 49 and there have been good numbers of female and BME participants as a result of positive action days.

Areas where improvement is still needed are false alarms, on-call availability and road traffic collisions. New areas covered include

- the Prince's Trust programme looks to support young people on the cusp of criminality, improving self-esteem and training qualifications, such as first aid certificates
- we continue to purchase fire appliances, agreeing a single specification collectively to save money.
- the cadets have been involved with trading standards in making test purchases, such as knives.

Graham Mitchell responded to Members' questions as follows:

- Any young person can apply to be a cadet. They have targeted Looked After Children and are currently hoping to attract children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, seeking a gender balance.
- Costs in dealing with flooding would generally be sought for a water main failure but the most common cause is surface water as a result of adverse weather. The priority is always to provide help to residents and businesses at the time.
- In relation to false alarms, 23% of the fire protection team's activity is conducting fire safety audits on premises with repeat false alarms. Information is shared with trading standards because if an organisation is not looking after its fire alarm, they may be falling short in other areas too.
- Volunteers offer cycling training in primary schools. Often parents of children who receive training go on to become volunteers.

- With regard to public reports in the area of road traffic enforcement, trading standards can take referrals – usually mobile phone pictures. There are costs in setting up such schemes but they are very effective.

Grahame Mitchell AGREED to the following actions:

- to circulate information about Fire Cadet Units;
- to circulate information on community reporting in traffic enforcement,
- to take feedback to officers on concerns about cycling proficiency in children of secondary school age;
- to arrange a meeting on plans regarding Thame Fire Station.

The Chairman thanked him for the report and asked that he pass on to his staff the compliments from Members on the activities in the area of community safety.

45/20 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
(Agenda No. 10)

Councillor Nick Carter asked about the OSCB succession plan. The Chairman AGREED to seek an update for the November meeting.

The proposed agenda for the November meeting was AGREED. The Chairman suggested that a longer meeting with a break would be needed to deal with that agenda.

The December meeting will deal with the budget and provision has been made to have a longer meeting than usual on that.

It was agreed to aim to take the Council's role as an accountable body and housing delivery together at the January meeting.

Other issues which will need to be added to the list are progress towards climate change targets and the Active Travel tranche 2.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 2020