

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
15 JANUARY 2014
7.30 - 9.30 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Mrs Hamilton (Vice-Chairman), Brossard, Gbadebo, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Kensall, Mrs McCracken and Mrs Temperton

Reverend Canon N Parish, Church of England (Oxford Diocese)
Mr R Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

Executive Members:

Councillors Dr Barnard

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning
David Watkins, Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention
Bob Welch, Chief Adviser: Learning & Achievement
Sandra Davies, Head of Performance Management and Governance
Karen Frost, Head of Prevention and Early Intervention
Alex Walters, Independent Chair, Local Safeguarding Children Board

34. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 11 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

Minute 26 Quarterly Service Report: It was clarified that the Children, Young People and Learning Department had not been subject to an Ofsted Inspection at the time of the meeting.

35. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest nor any indications that Members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

36. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

37. Public Participation

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

38. Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel Minutes

The Panel received a report setting out the summer examination and test results for Bracknell Forest Looked After Children for the 2012/13 academic year and the minutes of the most recent Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel meeting. The Panel noted the excellent post 16 and post 18 examination results and congratulated everyone involved in these achievements.

39. 2014/15 Draft Budget Proposals

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning presented a report on the key themes and priorities for the Children, Young People and Learning Department as outlined in the Council's Draft Budget Proposals for 2014/15. The key themes included draft budget pressures, draft budget savings, draft budget net position, capital spend, staffing implications, fees and charges and other income.

It was reported that the Department was subject to budget pressures of approximately £790,000 which were due in part to a rise in the number of looked after children and a recent case law change which had confirmed a duty on local authorities to fund the cost of education to the age of 25 for young people who have previously been supported by the local authority as a looked after child and who have no recourse to public funds to complete their education. In addition the Department was proposing savings of approximately £537,000 in 2014/15.

The Panel noted that a separate consultation on the Aiming High budget would take place and expressed the view that reducing funding for Home Start could impact on the Council's early intervention work.

The Panel noted the report.

40. Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2012/13

Alex Walters, Independent Chair of the Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), presented the LSCB Annual Report for 2012/13. The Statutory Annual Report set out an overview of safeguarding in the Borough and an assessment of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

Work areas of note for the LSCB during 2012/13 included: an in-depth case review of a small number of children where there had been a significant safeguarding incident which had not met the criteria for a Serious Case Review, the successful delivery of safeguarding training, the delivery of a successful conference on the theme of neglect to 250 members of the children's workforce across statutory, private and voluntary organisations and continued progress to meet targeted priority areas. The Annual Report also set out key messages for all those with responsibility for key partnerships and strategic planning across all organisations working with children, young people and families and targeted priorities for 2013/14. Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Under the new Ofsted Inspection framework, LSCBs would be subject to inspection. Ofsted had published clear criteria setting out the requirements for a 'Good' LSCB and a self assessment had been carried out to ascertain how Bracknell Forest's LSCB rated and to identify areas for development
- Generally those under the age of 12 or 13 years old were referred to as being children whilst those over 13 were referred to as being young people
- The majority of children who were subject to child protection plans were under the age of five

- It was acknowledged that there was a high proportion of children and young people who were subject to Child Protection Plans in Bracknell Forest compared to regional and national averages. The reasons for children being made subject to a Plan were often very complex and a study looking at children in need in the Borough had been completed. The outcomes of this study would be used to inform the work done to support families. Early intervention and support was also a crucial factor that helped prevent children being made subject to Child Protection plans
- The increased work to raise awareness of problems associated with Mephedrone use was a factor in the 19% increase in the number of under 18s accessing drug and alcohol treatment
- Capacity issues had impacted on the voluntary and community sector's ability to fully participate in the activities of the LSCB and the Adult safeguarding Board and work was taking place to re-establish links. A briefing on progress made in this area would be circulated
- An error was noted in the structure chart of the LSCB Executive and it was confirmed that the final published version of the Annual Report contained the correct version

The Panel thanked Alex Walters for her presentation and commended the clarity and focus of the report.

41. **Quarterly Service Report**

Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care, gave a presentation in respect of foster care recruitment in Bracknell Forest. The presentation included: an overview of the numbers of children in care and their placements, data relating to the number of foster carers in Bracknell Forest during the period March 2011 to December 2013, an overview of the approval process for those wishing to become foster carers, a summary of the types of foster carers needed in the Borough and an overview of the work taking place to recruit more foster carers.

It was noted that there were currently 115 children in foster care in Bracknell Forest and of these 68% were placed with Bracknell foster carers or with adoptive families, 17% were placed through independent fostering agencies and 15% were living in either residential homes or were living in independent settings. Whilst there was a national shortage of foster carers Bracknell Forest were steadily increasing the number registered in the Borough and there were currently 54 registered foster carers in Bracknell Forest and a further four were currently going through the approval process. It took approximately nine months for a person to go through the approval process to become a foster carer however when it was possible to proceed more quickly this was done. Information concerning the number of applications to become a foster carer and the percentage of successful selections was sought.

As part of the ongoing campaign to recruit more foster carers it was hoped that better links could be developed with local churches to help get the message out to the wider community and it was agreed that Reverend Canon Parish would be able to assist with appropriate contacts.

The Council's Adoption Service would be participating in a Pan Berkshire Adoption Party in the coming months in an effort to find adoptive families for a number of older or hard to place children. It was hoped that because the development of an emotional connection with a child was so important in the success or otherwise of an adoption it was hoped that this relatively new approach would prove successful.

The Panel received an update on the outcomes of Ofsted inspections of the Borough's maintained schools. It was noted that both Sandhurst School and Binfield CE Primary School had recently been graded good and that Wildmoor Heath was now graded as being satisfactory. The Panel noted that Bracknell and Wokingham College had recently been inspected and had moved from satisfactory to good.

The Panel thanked officers for their updates.

42. **New Ofsted Inspection Framework**

The Panel received a presentation in respect of Ofsted's new framework for Inspections of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Under the new framework inspections would be unannounced and take place on a three year cycle. Inspectors would be giving key judgements on:

- Protecting children
- Looked after children and achieving permanence
- Leadership, management and governance

In addition the performance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board would be examined and a separate judgement given. Over the four week inspection period, Inspectors would be carrying out a range of activities including: case file tracking, visiting children placed in out of area residential settings, observation of practice and meeting with children, young people, families and foster carers.

It was reported that Ofsted would be approaching inspections from the point of view that authorities and partners needed to be more ambitious for children in all settings and that all children deserved good services. If a service was considered by the Inspectors to be less than good then the Authority would be classified as requiring improvement.

It was noted that inspection teams would be made up of six inspectors plus quality assurance officers and it was expected that this level of attention would have an impact on the Department.

An update was given in respect of the new Ofsted inspections of Local Authority School Improvement Arrangements. It was noted that inspections would only be carried out where there were concerns about the effectiveness of local authority education functions for example where there were weak improvement trends or a higher than average number of schools in a low Ofsted category or a lower proportion of good and better schools than found nationally.

The inspections would look at the effectiveness of corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement, clarity and transparency of policy and strategy, the effectiveness of identification, intervention and the use of formal powers of intervention as well as challenge and support for school governance.

The Panel noted the updates.

43. **Annual Review of the Children and Young People's Plan**

Sandra Davies, Head of Performance and Governance, gave a presentation in respect of the implementation of the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014. The presentation included an overview of the Plan's priorities, key facts and data relating to the population, ethnicity, health and wellbeing, educational achievement

and vulnerable groups of children and young people in the Borough, examples of local initiatives and areas for development. The presentation also included an overview of the development of a new Children and Young Peoples Plan for the period 2014-2017.

It was noted that the outcomes of a consultation exercise with over 2,500 young people would be used to inform the development of the new Plan. A feedback session on the results of the consultation would take place on the afternoon of 12 February 2014 and all Panel members were welcome to attend.

It was agreed that data relating to the number of young people successfully completing drug treatment plans would be circulated. A report explaining the support provided to children and young people with English as an additional language would be provided at a future Panel meeting.

The Panel thanked Sandra Davies for her update.

44. **Self Assessment Against the Department of Education Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members of Children's Services**

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning presented a report setting out the Department for Education's Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services and a self assessment against these criteria.

It was noted that the self assessment included details of key actions and achievements and a commentary for each criteria and the criteria would be fed into action plans and service plans.

It was agreed that the inclusion of a ready reckoner matrix summarising the self assessment would be a helpful addition to future reports.

The Panel noted the report.

45. **Child Poverty Strategy: Progress and Next Steps**

Karen Frost, Head of Prevention and Early Intervention, presented a report providing an update on the implementation of the Bracknell Forest Child Poverty Strategy. It was reported that the Child Poverty Strategy, originally published in 2011, was reaching the end of its three year strategy and work was taking place to develop a new strategy to continue the positive work that was taking place to tackle child poverty in the Borough.

The current strategy was one of a number of strategies underpinning the Children and Young People's Plan and it was envisaged that the new Child Poverty Strategy would be a delivery plan for the Children and Young People's Plan, which was currently being reviewed.

It was reported that whilst there had been considerable progress in implementing the strategy the economic climate continued to have an impact on families and it was essential that the strategy remained focused on the right areas of need and actions and new initiatives were developed to ensure that those families that were affected by poverty received an appropriate level of support.

The Panel noted the report.

46. Local Healthwatch Protocol

The Panel received a report providing an update on the establishment of Healthwatch Bracknell Forest and the protocol by which Overview and Scrutiny would work jointly with the organisation.

The Panel noted the report.

47. Working Group Update Report and 2014/15 Work Programme

The Panel received a report providing an update on the progress made to date by the Working Group of the Panel reviewing school places and its proposed work programme for 2013/14. The Chairman requested the Panel give some thought to the next working group review topic to be undertaken following the completion of the school places review.

The Panel noted the report

48. Overview and Scrutiny Progress Report

The Panel noted a report providing a summary of Overview and Scrutiny activity during the period May to November 2013.

49. Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions

The Panel noted the scheduled Executive Key and Non Key Decisions relating to Children, Young people and Learning.

CHAIRMAN