

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
11 NOVEMBER 2020
6.30 - 8.30 PM**



Present:

Councillors Angell (Chairman), Virgo (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Brossard, Gbadebo, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Porter, Temperton and Tullett
Parent Governor representative: Tracey Wright

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Mrs McKenzie-Boyle
Parent Governor representative: Mark Glanville

Executive Members Present:

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning
Councillor Birch, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing
Councillor Harrison, Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection
Councillor Mrs Hayes, Executive Member for the Environment
Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance

Also Present:

Councillor Mrs McKenzie

In attendance:

Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive
Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery
Stuart McKellar, Director of Resources
Melanie O'Rourke, Interim Director: Adult Social Care
Sonia Johnson, Interim Director: Children's Social Care
Damian James, Assistant Director: Contract Services
Ann Moore, Head of Democratic and Registration Services

38. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 13 October 2020 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

39. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Birch asked for it to be recorded that she was the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing who was attending the meeting for the Council Plan Overview Report – budget scrutiny item.

There were no indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

40. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

41. Public Participation

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

42. Council Plan Overview Report - budget scrutiny

The Chief Executive introduced the Council Plan Overview Report (CPOR) covering the first quarter of 2020/21.

In response to a members' question the Chief Executive would update the Commission after the meeting as to whether the lease had been signed with South Hill Park.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission was aware from previous budget discussions that over 60% of the Council's expenditure was for Children's and Adults' social services. The Commission had invited the Interim Director: Adult Social Care and the Interim Director: Children's Social Care to attend the meeting to help the Commission understand the current costs that made up this expenditure and explore whether the Council was achieving value for money for residents.

The briefing presentations were included in the agenda pack and Councillors had submitted questions prior to the meeting.

Arising from the discussion following the briefing on Adult Social Care:

- it was explained that agency workers were typically employed for posts considered to be 'hard to recruit' nationally. Work was ongoing to develop multiple strategies to attract applicants including joint recruitment with health partners; how to make Bracknell Forest Council an attractive place to work; working with universities and where possible investing in existing committed employees to train them with the skills for such roles;
- work to support vulnerable residents had continued to provide that first conversation with assessments and reviews also continuing using full PPE throughout the pandemic period;
- regular contact had been maintained with residents who would have received care while it was not available during the pandemic therefore there would not be a spike of unmanageable activity as lockdown eased;
- care homes had been supported by the Council during the pandemic;
- preference continued to be 'home first' e.g. supporting people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible;
- as the population grows the service was developing a mixed economy of support;
- the Council was unable to influence the charges made by care homes for their self-funded clients but worked with 'My Care My Home' to support people to choose a care home by helping them ask the right questions part of which was financial
- the process was explained following the identification that someone required care including how assessments were costed then quality assured as well as a quality check being undertaken on the proposed care package;
- it was explained that it was an option for individuals to use their resource allocation to make direct payments to their own personal assistant in their own home rather than go into a residential or nursing home. It was recognised that this could offer better value for money and was provided for a large proportion of people;
- an iterative process of changing ways of working had occurred during the pandemic including use of technology which would complement the

transformation programme in the long term which, though currently paused, was still required. It was noted however that the pandemic had shifted its focus; and

- Adult Social Care was involved in conversations on adaptable properties for the future and working closely with health colleagues to support residents to maintain healthier lifestyles.

Arising from the discussion following the briefing on Children's Social Care:

- it was explained that assessments of children in need or identified to be at risk of harm was statutory and once assessed support would be escalated as required to avoid them coming to harm;
- it was explained that whilst the Family Safeguarding Model did mean that the issues being dealt with would evolve, it was not intended for long term intervention as cases were kept under review to identify whether the new issues met the threshold for intervention, whether the proposed solutions were working or whether cases needed to be escalated;
- the Family Safeguarding Model had given the service a very different way of working and families advise they feel more in control in the solutions through the family's maintenance plan;
- it was acknowledged that though the model would not work for everyone, there had been sustained change towards a reduction in re-referrals so there was reason to be optimistic;
- further resources had been added as the volume of referrals had increased and become more complex;
- schools had remained open for vulnerable children and were in close contact with any not attending as well as police responding to issues so referrals had continued throughout the pandemic and no spike was anticipated;
- there was still an appetite to join the 'What Works Centre' in which social workers were located in a school environment and it was anticipated that this was the direction of travel for the service including both schools and family hubs;
- no additional funding was available from central government for the next phase of the family safeguarding model but the 45% reduction in referrals had enabled cost avoidance which would help fund the third phase.
- it was explained that at the beginning of care procedures a family group conference was held to identify who could offer support either implementing the proposed solutions or providing short term care. Currently there were 19 children who were cared for by kinship and connected persons. It was agreed that family solutions were sought before foster care was explored; and
- the next phase of the family safeguarding model was identifying when adolescents within a supported family were beginning to show early indications themselves of the problem such as alcoholism or drug-use. This would allow early intervention and support would be provided for both the parent and the child. This was described as the 'right help, right time' approach.

The Chair thanked both Interim Directors for attending the meeting and providing information to the Commission on this expenditure and how value for money was provided.

43. **Work Programme Update**

Each Panel Chair provided a verbal update on work programme progress.

Education, Skills and Growth

The Care Leavers review had been considered by the Executive on 10 November, all recommendations were accepted and the report layout had been complemented.

An amendment to the Apprentices review scope was proposed, the evidence pack was being developed and three session dates had been arranged for:

- Monday 23 November @ 2 - 5 pm
- Thursday 26 November @ 2 - 5 pm
- Tuesday 1 December @ 6 pm

Environment and Communities

The Strategic Housing: Registered Social Landlords review was in the process of being scheduled and the evidence pack was being developed with officers.

Wellbeing and Finance

The scope for the Isolation and Loneliness review was proposed to the meeting.

The Commission agreed that:

- i) the amendment to the scope for the Apprentices review be accepted;
and**
- ii) the proposed scope for the Isolation and Loneliness review be approved
and the review commissioned.**

CHAIR