

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
13 OCTOBER 2020
6.30 - 9.20 PM**



Present:

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Mrs McKenzie-Boyle

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

Also Present:

Councillors Brown, Kirke and Mrs Ingham

In attendance:

Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive
Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery
Rachel Morgan, Assistant Director: Education and Learning
Sarah Gee, Assistant Director: Early Help & Communities
Ann Moore, Head of Democratic and Registration Services
Alison O'Meara, Head of Community Safety
Superintendent Felicity Parker, Local Police Commander Bracknell & Wokingham

30. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 15 September 2020 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

31. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Birch declared a personal interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing.

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

32. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

33. Public Participation

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

34. **Community Safety**

Timothy Wheadon, Chair of Community Safety Partnership, Alison O'Meara, Head of Community Safety and Superintendent Felicity Parker, Local Police Commander Bracknell & Wokingham had been invited to attend. Meeting as the Crime and Disorder Committee, the members present received a presentation on the performance of the Community Safety Partnership and the priorities in the Community Safety Plan for the coming year.

In response to the questions submitted in advance and arising from discussion it was noted:

- the approach to hotspots for antisocial behaviour was explained which involved a partnership problem solving group to use its multi-agency membership to consider the appropriate response – this would be applied to the identified area at Westmoreland Park to prepare for possible future activity
- responses were based on consideration of risk to public safety and needed to be proportionate with longer term solutions of approaching schools, speaking to parents and engaging youth workers more appropriate in some instances
- a previous presentation to the Commission had stated that the aim was for more reported crimes to be recorded but it was explained that the crime data process changes were most significant in domestic violence figures due to the volume involved rather than increases seen on crimes such as burglaries
- there was now a dedicated Criminal Investigation Department (CID) team investigating crimes for the local area
- support services were wrapped around domestic violence victims and their children to reduce the level of retraction statements and evidence-based prosecutions were used to charge offenders
- the figures for the volume of domestic abuse retraction statements would be provided
- the partnership's strategy was a holistic approach to community safety and prevention and there were no specific percentage or numerical targets within the plan
- the local policing target was to reduce residential burglaries by 5% this year, with 15% over three years and a 3% reduction had been achieved the previous year
- the outcome rate was approximately 15% of residential burglaries last year with just under 12% this year to date
- awareness and signage schemes were in place to stop cycling in the town centre and neighbourhood police officers were aware of an increase in the use of electric scooters and would be tackling this appropriately
- residents were encouraged to ring 101 or complete the Thames Valley Police online reporting form in order for local intelligence to be collated
- the Partnership's approach was to make drug dealing as difficult as possible and activities involved targeting hot spots
- maintaining a clear approach to responding to child sexual exploitation continued to be a priority for the Community Safety Partnership
- an awareness campaign including social media posts and videos was being launched this week to encourage people to recognise the signs of exploitation and know how to raise concerns

The Chair thanked the representatives of the Community Safety Partnership for their attendance.

35. **Education and schools related mental health**

The Commission invited Councillors Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning and Birch, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing to attend to discuss Education and schools related mental health.

The Commission was keen to understand how schools had responded to the health pandemic for example use of ICT for tuition, protection of teachers during lessons, student motivation, plans for future exams and the impact of the pandemic on students mental health and those of their families.

In response to the questions submitted in advance and arising from discussion it was noted that:

- governors and leadership teams of schools were recognised for the swift adaption of the provision of education and responding to daily challenges
- the Bracknell Forest school community had pulled together during the pandemic to share good practice and had adapted their home working strategies and approaches which ranged from virtual assemblies, digital lessons to paper workbooks to be printed at home
- James Sunderland, Bracknell's Member for Parliament had arranged for a group of primary and secondary Headteachers to a virtual meeting to discuss the challenges that covid-19 has brought into schools with Robert Halfen the Chair of the Education Select Committee
- schools had responsibility for procuring their own internet and resources but the real issue had been where households in the borough did not have access to broadband so schools had supported families where they could with laptops and 4G devices but it was recognised that they did not have ability to do this straight away and it was not always possible for every child within a home to have a device
- strategies for accessing work had continued and made school work accessible to those pupils isolating
- online access had been given to Oakwood Academy so virtual resources were available but challenge was to match provision to individual schools
- explanation of support provided to schools to undertake risk assessment, policy development and provision of PPE to protect the whole school community
- across the borough (as per national experience) it was acknowledged that motivation of students and engagement with remote learning varied day to day and subject to subject, noticeable that there was a minority who did not engage at all. Schools had used virtual assemblies, introduced a sense of fun, virtual cooking classes and quizzes with creative activities to engage students.
- Department for Education letter described that the impact was more significant on those young people with existing needs or issues and further emerging evidence that in others that the experience had helped them build resilience.
- Youthline had undertaken increased amount of online counselling and have moved their services moved to Portman Close site which has been beneficial with bigger rooms enabling face to face appointments
- 15 extra children were now being home educated and support was being provided to those families.
- Kooth services were available for young people to use mobile phones to engage with their peer groups in a safe environment
- There had been an increase in referrals of young people to mental health services and work was ongoing to address the low number of young people being discharged from health practitioners

- Clinical Commissioning Group partners had engaged with digital assessments where practitioners were able to do assessments online
- members present were encouraged to look at the Barnardo's report at effect on young people's health of covid 19 (<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/mental-health-covid19-in-our-own-words-report.pdf>)
- concerns were shared about collating the right data to inform future strategies however it was highlighted that during the constantly changing pressures of responding to the pandemic there were no capacity to do this in our schools but that the government was doing this nationally
- concerns were raised about how students were treated in relation to exam results and whether the proposals for future exams would be able to respond to ongoing pandemic environment. It was agreed that whatever solution was settled on they would need to be fair and consistent.
- training would start in the spring term with mentors within schools to help promote mental health and the intention was to train the trainer to build capacity and make the programme sustainable
- the Department for Education was allowing for claims relating to the pandemic, but the narrow parameters meant that it was not guaranteed that everything would be covered e.g. additional cleaning costs, loss of income from letting facilities. The meeting was advised that Executive members were raising this at every opportunity.
- Both Executive members thanked all of their colleagues working in health and education working to deliver services to the Bracknell community

The Chair thanked the Executive Members for their attendance.

36. **Care Leavers Review**

The Commission considered the findings of the Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel's review into Care Leavers.

Councillor Mrs Birch, Chair of the Panel shared the lessons learnt from the completed review:

- the duration of the review session was too long to be effective so not recommended
- unfortunate delay in finalising report had created opportunity for reflection and inclusion of impact of covid on careleavers
- report format focused on outcomes, clearly stated its findings and put the recommendations first

She concluded by thanking everyone involved in the review.

The Commission endorsed the submission of their report and recommendations to the Executive.

37. **Work Programme**

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission considered the report which sought formal agreement on the proposals for revising the Overview & Scrutiny work programme in light of the national health pandemic. The Commission had been discussing a revised programme and the report pulled together revised priorities, updated scope for reviews, proposed timescales, virtual ways of working and the impact of the pandemic on affected services.

It was agreed that:

- i) the proposed review scopes for Apprenticeships and Registered Social Landlords Review be commissioned; and
- ii) the scope for each future review be brought back to the Commission before commencement to ensure they had been updated in light of the national health pandemic in terms of their focus, approach and timing.

CHAIRMAN