

SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2020
11.00 am - 2.30 pm Virtual Meeting

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes

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Present

Councillor Claire Wild (Chair)

Councillors Joyce Barrow, Karen Calder, Roger Evans, Hannah Fraser, Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock, Dave Tremellen and Leslie Winwood

86 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Mosley and Les Winwood.

87 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

88 Minutes of the meetings held on 10th June and 8th July 2020

Consideration of the minutes of the meetings held on 10th June and 8th July 2020 were deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

89 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

90 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

91 Update on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Local Area Inspection

The Acting Interim Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services presented her report and introduced Claire Parker, Director of Partnerships, NHS Shropshire CCQ and NHS Telford and Wrekin CCQ, and Zara Bowden, Chair of the Parent and Carers Council [PACC] who were in attendance. Members noted the significant areas of strength identified by the Inspectors during the recent Joint SEND CQC and Ofsted Inspection, as well as the areas identified for improvement. In response to a Member's observation, she confirmed that joint working between the Council and local stakeholders had undergone significant recent improvement and that the appointment of Claire Parker as SEND Health Lead, had further strengthened the strategic and operational aspects of the working relationship. This was endorsed by Ms Parker.

Members attention was drawn to section 5.6 of the report where areas of improvement were identified. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that Officers were aware of these areas prior to the inspection and work had already started to address the issues raised. The Inspectors had identified a lack of robustness and the need to improve methods of measuring outcomes in the Action Plan and a Written Statement of Action [WSOA] had been requested. The WSOA was in the process of being redrafted and Ofsted had agreed with the Local Authority and the CCG that it would be published on the 25th September 2020.

In response to a Member's question the Director of Children's Services confirmed that the Action Plan would be considered by the People Overview Committee after PACC, Ofsted and the CQC and had had the opportunity to make comment. The People Scrutiny Committee would have oversight of the delivery of the Action Plan once agreed with the CCG and PACC.

Referring Members to section 5.9.1 of the report which set out the six key findings of the Inspection, Ms Parker observed that the inspection had occurred before the outbreak and limitations of the Covid-19 Pandemic which had significantly changed working practices due to the restrictions and the need to adopt new technology. She cited the example of the Speech and Language Therapy [SaLT] Service which at the time of the Inspection had long waiting lists. Processes had been reassessed and the backlog had been significantly reduced.

Members noted that Shropshire had higher levels of school exclusions for children with special education needs than many other local authority areas. The Director of Children's Services explained that this was a complicated area and no one factor could be identified as the cause of this. She continued that a whole system approach was required to support schools. The Team Manager, Education Access Services explained that due to the Covid-19 crisis it was difficult to currently assess the effectiveness of the support provided. Ms Bowden added that the issue was not only about the inclusivity of schools but crossed over into many other areas of health provision and wrap around services and welcomed the improved relationships between education and health services.

The Director of Children's Services advised that the governance arrangements for overseeing joint working were under review as part of the Action Plan. It was anticipated that the current 0-25 oversight board would be replaced with a smaller more strategic oversight group, which would tie in more closely with the overview and scrutiny arrangements for the CCG and Local Authority. The importance of hearing the voice of parents and carers had also been recognised and it was anticipated that a parent/carers champion would be appointed to each SEND forum.

In response to a Member's question, Ms Bowden confirmed that PACC were satisfied with the areas addressed by the report, she noted that while some areas could have been more critical but other areas were reflected more poorly than expected. She continued that Post 16 transitional education or movement to adult services were of concern but these concerns were being picked up in the Action Plan and featured in discussions with regional leads.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that CAHMS would be included in the Action Plan. The Director of Partnerships, CCQ, added that it was acknowledged that CAHMS needed work and development to support all children and young people through mental health services and behavioural support services.

In response to a Member's observations regarding the historic relationships between stakeholders, the Director of Children's Services acknowledged that the issues raised regarding engagement of the Health and Wellbeing Board representatives would be addressed through the examination of the governance mechanisms. She expressed commitment to addressing blockages and barriers to drive forward the necessary improvements to the service.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Partnerships, CCG, acknowledged previous poor performance of the CCG but reassured Members of her determination to improve SEND in Shropshire, recognised through the Statement of Intent. She continued that it was important to now move forward.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services welcomed the inspection as an opportunity for all parties to come together and improve partnership working. He supported the importance of good relationships with the Health and Wellbeing Board and welcomed the positive attitude of the CCG and the opportunities this presented to work with partners in a constructive way.

The Director of Children's Services acknowledged a Member's observation about the possibility of increased waiting times to access services caused by the Covid-19 crisis. She agreed that this was going to be a challenge that all public services would encounter, but new ways of working and interfacing were being developed and would become part of the new normal. She added that it was still too early to fully understand the medium and long term impact of the crisis. The Director of Partnerships, CCG, added that re-instating health services suspended during the crisis was a hugely complicated process. She continued that the rapid move to digital solutions had been a positive outcome. Members noted that a return to the operating methods pre-covid was now highly unlikely.

In response to the Chairman's request for closing comments, Ms Bowden explained that from a parent/carer's perspective the biggest barrier with joint partnership working was the different layers of bureaucracy when different organisations tried to work together and conflicts these caused. She continued that joint working and commissioning were an essential part of the process and she welcomed the commitment to improve working relationships and continued that an improved voice for parents/carers through being invited to participate in the work of scrutiny committees was also a positive step forward. She observed that national agendas would assist with local issues, an example of this was the covid-19 response. She welcomed the commitment to finding ways of engaging young people directly without the need for parents to talk for them.

In response to a Members concern about children's return to school in September the Director of Children's Services confirmed that schools were aware that there would be issues with children transitioning to full time education. Work had begun with schools to ensure that they were prepared for the problems they may encounter.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the GGC be thanked for attending;
- ii) That the contents of the report and actions identified be noted;
- iii) That the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee add the issues raised with regard to health to their work programme
- iv) That the People Overview Committee will monitor the implementation of SEND within Shropshire;
- v) That the date for publication of WSoA be noted as 25th September 2020; and
- vi) That both Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services and Climate Change be appointed as champions for SEND.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.26pm and resumed at 12.38pm.

92 Climate Change

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager introduced the report. He advised that he was the Leader of the Climate Task Force which had been established in November 2019. Members were reminded that Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and had approved the Climate Strategy Framework in December 2019, with the objective that the Council corporately would achieve net zero carbon by 2030. The Climate Strategy Framework set out how this would be achieved.

The Director of Place confirmed that carbon reduction policies ran through much of the work of the Council and the Council had a leadership role within the local communities to promote wider carbon reduction. He continued that despite the importance of this work, central Government provided few formal grants for the work to be undertaken. The Climate Task Force was promoting a better integrated narrative with Government.

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager agreed that early investment to reduce carbon emissions would result in longer term savings through improved energy performance, he continued that it was now possible to begin measuring and quantifying benefits although this was still complicated. The Sustainability Commissioning Officer added that emphasis was put on embedding renewable projects which were energy efficient and developing clear strategies with technical interventions to achieve these.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Place confirmed that planned changes to the use of Shirehall were being underpinned by a staff survey to assess the impact these would have on staff as well as work to fully understand the environmental impact of this change.

Members asked for further information on how the Covid-19 Pandemic had impacted on the Active Travel Strategy. The Director of Place confirmed that The Active Travel

Strategy featured in LTP4 submissions to central government in applications for funding to provide electric buses. Experimental transport regulation orders had been put into place which accelerated the increase in cycling and walking in Shrewsbury.

Members noted a number of other initiatives in the areas of waste management, Marches Energy Agency, housing development and energy generation.

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager explained the meaning of Scope 1,2 and 3. Which were terms derived from international greenhouse gas emissions and were standard definitions across the world. With Scope 1 being emission produced by the Council's own activity and Scope 3 was carbon emissions produced on the Council's behalf by contractors. He added that it was important to include all scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions when assessing carbon production.

In response to a Member's question, the Planning Policy and Strategy Manager confirmed that an extensive amount of work had been undertaken since the declaration of a climate emergency to embed and normalise climate change considerations in the Council's strategies and corporate governance systems across the Council. Members noted the example of how the Climate Change Policy had been incorporated into the new Local Plan and other planning policies, as well as the other projects set out in the report.

The Director of Place responded to a Member's query regarding the Council's support for carbon reduction in the wider community, that is was important to confidently engage and influence through policies which encouraged higher standards.

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager explained that it was important to be aware of the future impacts on climate change and be prepared for them through improving standards of design. It was anticipated that extreme weather would be more frequent, and this would impact on services. The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change added that the Council was already considering local energy networks to generate energy to be returned to the national grid. With green businesses being encouraged to relocate to the county with the view to making it a central base for the sector.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the progress being made towards the embedding and normalising climate change in the Council's corporate governance, together with the projects and initiatives being developed as part of an action plan to deliver net-zero performance by 2030 be noted.
- ii) That the climate change draft action plan and quantified carbon budget be reviewed by the Communities Overview Committee in autumn 2020.

93 Financial Strategy

The Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance introduced the Medium-Term Financial Strategy report. Member noted that the Financial Strategy had been set and approved in February 2020 before the onset of the Covid-19 crisis and has subsequently been updated as it was effectively out of date before the start of the financial year. Further funding had been made available from Government after the updated report had been published.

The Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance outlined the main points of the report and explained that the financial pressures caused by the Covid-19 crisis were being carefully monitored with a report being produced at the end of every month detailing the expenditure and grants received.

In response to a Member's question regarding progress of the Government's Fair Funding review, the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance anticipated that this would be delayed due to the Covid-19 crisis and funding would be based on what had been received previously.

A Member asked for further information on a Government announcement that lost income would be re-reimbursed and the resources available for the establishment of recovery teams. The Director of Finance Governance and Assurance explained that the Income Guarantee was a complex formula with the first 5% of expenditure being the responsibility of the Council. The Government had defined the types of losses covered and these were funded up to 75% of expenditure. He continued that Council finance officers were working through the guidance to establish what was included in the scheme to enable the return to be completed.

The Director of Place added that two task force teams had been established to address recovery and the social impact on economic development in the County. He continued that the Growth Hub had been able to give advice on accessing finance to local businesses. Projects had also been accelerated that would benefit the local economy.

In response to a Member's question the Director of Place agreed that it was important that all stakeholders in the local economy worked with the Council on the recovery, matching needs to providers and sectors.

RESOLVED:

That the Medium Term Financial Strategy – July 2020 – 2020/21 to 2025/26, be noted.

94 Future Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that the other Overview Committees that had been suspended at the start of the Covid-19 crisis were restarting work in September 2020. Members commented that they had enjoyed considering topics outside the usual remit of the Committee and this had given an insight on partnership working during the Covid-19 crisis and the impact this had had on performance.

.....Members observed that new working methods had brought improvements in working practices, as well as problems caused by more agile working.

RESOVLED:

That the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership [LEP] be invited to report to the September meeting.

95 Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee

Members noted that next meeting of the Committee would be at 2.00pm on Wednesday 16th September 2020.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: