



Committee and Date

People Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

2nd July 2025

PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2025

In the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ

10.00 am - 12.03 pm

Responsible Officer: Shelley Davies

Email: shelley.davies@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257718

Present

Councillor Peggy Mullock

Councillors Jeff Anderson, Peter Broomhall, Ruth Houghton, Hilary Luff, Caroline Bagnall (Substitute) (substitute for Kevin Pardy) and Julian Dean (Substitute) (substitute for Duncan Kerr)

22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Duncan Kerr (Substitute: Julian Dean), Kevin Pardy (Substitute: Caroline Bagnall), Kevin Turley, Claire Wild and Sian Lines (Diocesan Board of Education).

23 Disclosable Interests

Councillor Hilary Luff declared an interest as the Director of a Children's nursery and Childminders.

Councillor Ruth Houghton declared an interest as a trustee at Bethphage, a learning disability charity and noted that her Grandson attended Severndale Academy.

24 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th November 2024 be confirmed as an accurate record.

25 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

26 Member Question Time

There were no member questions.

27 Children's Participation and Impact Strategy

Siobhan Hughes, Service Manager Early Help presented the Children's Participation and Impact Strategy report, explaining that the strategy aimed to ensure that children and young people have a voice in decision-making processes, both in their day-to-day lives and in larger decisions about services provided to them. It was added that the strategy included plans to create a youth Parliament and involve young people in various forums and decision-making bodies.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- The project in Market Drayton where young people had worked with the Parish Council to improve the local skate park was funded through grant funding and existing resources.
- The Lundy principles aim to create more spaces for young people to be heard, emphasizing face-to-face interactions rather than online meetings.
- The statutory duties in relation to youth services were changing and the new National Youth Strategy emphasized the responsibilities of local authorities more than before, including a greater focus on participation and ensuring that young people have a voice in decision-making processes.
- The Project Board sought to address the challenges of engaging young people in rural areas and the suggestions from members which included providing transportation such as a bus service, to help young people access activities and social opportunities, similar to services provided for older residents would be investigated.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. Agree the Participation and Impact Strategy for young people and note the ambitions set out in the strategy.
2. Endorse the Council's commitment to ensuring that children and young people have influence over decisions and actions on services that affect them.

28 Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3

Tanya Miles, Executive Director for People introduced the Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 which gave an update on key areas of performance across Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Education services under the People's Directorate.

Natalie McFall, Assistant Director Adult Social Care and Housing and Michelle Williams, Service Manager Long Term Support outlined key areas of the report in relation to Adult Social Care. It was reported that the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and the Safeguarding teams have merged under one

management structure and the occupational therapy service had transitioned to adult social care in August 2024.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- The DoLS team faced significant pressure due to a high volume of referrals and despite addressing the 2022 backlogs, the referral levels continued to be high which made it difficult to reduce the waiting list significantly.
- There was an increasing complexity in the cases being referred, particularly with individuals lacking capacity and requiring residential and nursing care which was adding to the pressure on the DoLS team.
- The reablement service focused on working with individuals to maximize their potential, which helped to ensure that care was provided appropriately and cost-effectively. This approach aimed to reduce wastage by continuously reviewing and adjusting care packages based on individuals' needs and progress.
- The spike in DoLS waiting times in 2024 was due to changes in the way referrals were triaged and managed which led to an initial increase in waiting times as they adjusted to the new system. The impact on individuals was managed through close collaboration between social workers and care home managers, ensuring that risks were identified and mitigated early on.
- The current community and family hubs were located in Highley, Bridgnorth, Oswestry, Ludlow and Shrewsbury and there were plans to establish hubs in Market Drayton and Whitchurch. It was added that there was an ambition to have hubs in as many communities as possible, including rural areas, to ensure widespread access to services.
- The team would look to include information in future reports regarding Disabled Facilities Grant allocations to show how people were supported at home through occupational therapy.

David Shaw, Assistant Director Education & Achievement, outlined key areas of the report in relation to Learning and Skills noting the retention of strong early years provision in Shropshire, which had been recognised by the Department of Education. It was reported that there had been a significant reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET), which had been achieved through a proactive approach to prevent future challenges and there had been a reduction in permanent exclusions and suspensions in schools, as a result of targeted intervention programs.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- There was a focus on reducing exclusions and suspensions in secondary schools as there were higher rates of permanent exclusions in secondary schools compared to primary schools. It was added that the Alternative

Provision Inclusion Development Fund was targeted at secondary schools to address these issues.

- The team holds data on exclusions and suspensions, including trends of young people who were excluded in primary school and continue to face exclusions in secondary school. It was agreed that case studies would be provided to a future meeting to illustrate the targeted work and its impact on preventing exclusions.
- The closure of Bedstone College may have an impact on the local education system for the new academic year and the admissions team was closely monitoring the situation to manage any potential influx of students and ensure that their educational needs were met effectively.
- Shropshire had a slightly higher rate of elective home education compared to the national average and concern was raised about cases where home schooling may not be suitable, such as when a child was under a child protection plan.
- The low NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) figure for 16 to 17-year-olds in Shropshire was considered accurate due to the robust tracking and engagement processes implemented by the team, which included direct follow-ups with young people to ensure they were accessing education, employment, or training opportunities.

Sonya Miller, Assistant Director Children's Social Care & Safeguarding and Amanda Beaufoy, Service Manager Case Management outlined key areas of the report in relation to Children's Social Care noting the Early Help programme which provided targeted support and intervention for families at an earlier stage.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- The number of children returning to care after being discharged was extremely low, with only two children coming back into care this year. The low rate was attributed to the ongoing support provided by the Stepping Stones team, who remain involved with families even after a child returns home.
- There had been progress in relation to the recruitment of social workers, with approximately six experienced social workers hired in the last three months. It was added that the assessment teams were expected to be fully staffed within the next couple of weeks.

Officers were thanked for their report.

29 Work Programme

Sophie Foster, Scrutiny Officer reported that as this was the last meeting before the local elections there was an opportunity to highlight topics and areas of work for the Committee post May 2025.

It was recommended that:

- The Children's Participation and Impact Strategy be shared with the Committee.
- Future performance reports include information in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants and Exclusion Intervention.
- The areas of Dementia, Early Help and Family and Community Hubs to be kept as a focus for the Committee.
- The Blue Badge process be looked at in relation to the delays being experienced and impact on individuals.
- The previous work undertaken by the Committee be forwarded to the committee members from May 2025 for context and understanding.

In bringing the meeting to a close, the Chairman extended her thanks to all Officers and Members involved in the work of the Committee for their help and support.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: