

Minutes of the People Services Scrutiny Committee

Monday 6th July, 2015 at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

Present:

Councillor M Mottram (Chair)
Councillor M Attwood (Vice Chair)
Councillors N Barlow, C Baugh, R Body, P Bradley, D Hemingsley, C Perks, G Simms, S Tyler and D Vickers; Reverend A Wickens and Mr A Qadus.

Officers:

P Coyne (Chief Officer – Planning and Economic Development) (Acting Lead Officer), T Oakman, Strategic Director (People Services), M Bowsher (Chief Officer - Adult Social Care), D Harkins (Chief Officer – Health and Well Being) and H Shepherd (Democratic Services Officer) (Directorate of Resources and Transformation).

Invitees:

Claire Burgess – LGA Children's Improvement

1 Apology for absence

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Mrs Ward.

2 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct were made by the following Members:-

Councillor R Body – All matters in relation to YMCA and homeless young adults
- Non-pecuniary interest as a YMCA Host caring for homeless teenagers.

Councillor M Attwood – All matters in relation to Short Stay Schools – Non-pecuniary interest as a Governor of the Short Stay Schools – Dudley Management Committee.

3 Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the former Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12th March, 2015, be approved as a correct record and signed.

4 **Public Forum**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

5 **Terms of Reference for the People Services Scrutiny Committee**

A report of the Strategic Director (Resources and Transformation) was submitted on the terms of reference for the People Services Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/16 municipal year.

Resolved

That, the terms of reference for the People Services Scrutiny Committee, as set out in the appendix to the report submitted, be noted.

6 **Annual Scrutiny Programme 2015/16**

The Committee considered a report of the Lead Officer and Strategic Director (Resources and Transformation) on the items proposed for inclusion in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for detailed consideration during 2015/16, these being:

- Falls Prevention Service/Strategy
- Care Act Implementation
- Safeguarding Children Annual Report/Child Sexual Exploitation/MASH
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and Annual Safeguarding Report
- 0-5 Offer (Update re: Nurseries/School Nurse Health Visit Contract)

The Strategic Director (People Services) gave a brief summary of each topic and identified specific areas for scrutiny.

Following the presentation of each item, the Strategic Director (People Services), suggested a further topic for inclusion in the Annual Scrutiny Programme, relating to School Improvement and Performance Data, which was an area of significant importance that warranted closer scrutiny. The Chair and Members agreed to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that this item be included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2015/16, for consideration towards the end of the municipal year.

Concerns were raised by Members with regards to Safeguarding and the exploitation of children and young adults and the need to improve communications with the public. Members expressed the need for telephone contact numbers to be readily available for the public to report any concerns or incidents witnessed.

The Strategic Director (People Services) stated that work was currently being undertaken to develop more efficient working relationships with partners such as Schools, West Midlands Police and the NHS. It was envisaged that the implementation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) would create a one 'front door' approach. He also stated that a CSE event, to promote the issue, would be arranged to take place during the Autumn.

A member referred to the training provided to Councillors and Officers in relation to Safeguarding issues and child exploitation, but suggested that this type of training needed to be expanded to incorporate the general community. Clarification was also requested as to what action was being taken to raise awareness of child exploitation in schools; How were children advised on the issue; Were teachers aware of current issues; What prevention mechanisms were in place; What provisions were in place other than those in Schools i.e. Churches and Mosques.

The Strategic Director (People Services) confirmed that these were all relevant areas to be scrutinised under this topic and that awareness in schools was undertaken in many different ways including drama productions which were considered powerful ways to interact with children.

Claire Burgess, Local Government Association (LGA), Children's Improvement, gave a brief introduction with regards to her role at the LGA and suggested ways in which the Committee could ensure that the Council met its statutory requirements regarding scrutiny of the functions of People Services, particularly focusing on safeguarding and looked after children and how the LGA could support the Committee during the Scrutiny process.

In response to a question raised by a Member in relation to how the Committee could be assured that true information would be provided, Claire Burgess advised that the key to ensuring that information provided was genuine was for Members to ask the right questions and to obtain relevant and applicable evidence to support that information. It was considered important that not just one piece of evidence should be taken into consideration, but that four or five on the same topic should be provided for Members to be assured. Members were also encouraged to meet with key groups and people and to listen to the children themselves. This did not necessarily mean in person, but could be via pre-recorded video or video link.

The Strategic Director (People Services) also gave assurance that all information provided would be genuine and factual so that Dudley's strengths and areas of improvement could be identified and discussed fully.

The Chief Officer - Adult Social Care referred to forthcoming Safeguarding training sessions and encouraged all Members to contribute positively to the sessions. The presentations and relevant documents would be circulated electronically to members after each event to ensure that those unable to attend could be updated.

The Chair, on behalf of Members of the Scrutiny Committee, thanked Claire Burgess for attending the meeting and for her support during the scrutiny process.

Resolved

- (i) That, the items contained in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for the 2015/16 municipal year, as referred to in paragraph 3 and Appendix 1 of the report submitted, be endorsed.
- (ii) That, a recommendation for an additional item in relation to School Improvement and Performance Data be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for inclusion in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for this Committee during the 2015/16 municipal year.
- (iii) That, an informal meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, in partnership with the Local Government Association, be arranged relating to scrutiny and assurance around children safeguarding.

The meeting ended at 7.15pm.

CHAIR