Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ on Monday, 14 January 2019

Present:
Pauline Batstone (Chairman)
Katharine Garcia (Vice-Chairman), Kevin Brookes, Toni Coombs, Beryl Ezzard, Bill Pipe and Kate Wheller

Officers Attending: Nick Jarman (Corporate Director for Children's Services), Paul Beecroft (Communications Officer (Internal)), David Bonner (Intelligence, Insight and Performance Manager), Jonathan Carter (Head of Specialist Services), Michael Potter (Project Engineer), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance), Martyn Underhill (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Fiona King (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on: **Tuesday, 12 March 2019**

Apologies for Absence

1 There were no apologies for absence.

Code of Conduct

2 There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

3 The minutes from the meeting held on 11 October 2018 were agreed and signed.

Public Participation

4 Public Speaking

There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

There were no public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(2).

Petitions

There were no petitions received at the meeting in accordance with the County Council's Petition Scheme.

Update from the Police and Crime Commissioner

5 Following the recent collapse of the proposed merger with Devon and Cornwall Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) gave members a presentation on the details of the proposed merger (attached as an annexure to these minutes). The PCC noted that all of the four decision makers 'signed off' the business plan however, despite this Alison Hernandez then decided that she did not want to pursue it.

The proposal had been driven by operational police and not by politicians. The main reasons for a merger were about increasing operational resilience within the Police. Whilst the merger would have saved another £70m, now that it is not happening, the cost to Dorset as a result of the failure would be between 100 and 150 frontline police

officers.

Following a question about the amount of money spent on the merger the PCC undertook to forward the details to members outside of the meeting. Costs included the consultation and on-costs in relation to staff working on the proposals. These costs have been confirmed, as around £250k, with the agreements that, due to the relative sizes of the two police forces, Devon and Cornwall police would fund 70% of the merger programme and 30% would be funded by Dorset Police. Specifically, the net spend in 2017/18 was £12,059 (as the Alliance was successful in securing a £50,000 Police Transformation Fund grant), and £233,725 in 2018/19.

The PCC highlighted to members the Home Office Assessment Criteria and the aims that sat underneath them and was still hopeful that this could be achieved as part of the Alliance work.

Following a question about the reasons for the Devon and Cornwall PCC not wishing to proceed with the merger, the PCC advised she felt there was not enough stakeholder support, specifically from Local Authorities and Councillors, and differences in respect of the precept which she wished to increase it higher which would have then needed government permission. The PCC and Policing Minister felt this would be unfair on the other 42 Police Forces in the country.

The Chairman asked what impact the collapse of the merger had on the PCC's ability to keep Dorset safe. The PCC felt there would be an impact but highlighted that Dorset Police were recognised as a good strong police force. He highlighted that inter agency co-operation was not so good and needed to get better, as highlighted in recent inspection reports. He felt this would be easier to achieve with a merged force. He added that there was still an opportunity to go for an all age vulnerability hub model.

In response to a question about whether a merger could take place in the future the PCC felt that with a change in government this could happen and noted that Section 32, of the police Act 1996, gave the Home Secretary the power to force a merge.

Following a discussion about all the work that had been done in preparation for the merger, the PCC confirmed that this would be useful in years to come and that information from previous years had been used when the business case was being compiled. He added that all best and poor practice had been captured.

Moving forward the PCC highlighted how officers and partners could get better at vulnerability and that the precept rise which was currently being consulted on, would help to address this. It was hoped to transform various areas of policing this year, along with an increase in some frontline staff with the proposed £24 precept rise.

The PCC advised members of the programme of roadshows, to talk to members of the public about the precept, that he had been attending and that at a recent one in Bournemouth he had spoken with more than 80 people. He highlighted the higher support received from the public with face-to-face contact rather than online.

Following a question from a member about a recent article in the press regarding a private security company operating in the Weymouth area, for a charge, and the PCC's views on this. The PCC responded that he felt uncomfortable with this approach and thought it could lead to a bigger debate in policing.

Noted

Safeguarding Vulnerable Children

6 Following the publication of a news article entitled 'The government report says Dorset Council is not safeguarding the most vulnerable children' the Director for Children's Services explained to members the progress that had been made to date and highlighted the report which set out a number of activities that were on going.

He explained this article arose from a joint targeted inspection review which happened back in May 2018 and since then a written statement of proposed actions had been submitted and accepted without any further amendments. This was not just about children from Dorset but all children in Dorset. There were around 37 children in this group at present and a Children Missing Education Group had since been formed as it was important to know where these children were and that they were receiving education appropriate for their needs.

The Director added that neglect was a common reason why Children Services were involved with families and he was continuing a review of how neglect was being dealt with. The directorate was working closely with Somerset which was proving successful in terms of cross border issues.

One member made reference to some media coverage some time ago in respect of sexual exploitation when Dorset was criticised for not knowing how many young people were at risk. She was concerned that some of the lessons had not been learned. The Director explained the increasing demands on all departments and that in the past expectations were not there for certain groups of young people but he did understand the prevalence of this. Nowadays the focus was on partnership working and confirmed officers worked very closely with the Police, especially in respect of county lines.

Noted

Outcomes Focused Monitoring Report: December 2018

7 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services which included the most up to date available data on the population indicators within the 'Safe' outcome along with information on performance measures and risk management.

The Strategic, Insight, Intelligence and Performance Manager highlighted areas for focus in respect of Children and Adults. He also highlighted the changes to the format and style of the report with the aim of making some of the statistics clearer. The Chairman was pleased to see rates and percentages but would prefer to see actual numbers listed in the report.

In respect of highway maintenance this was highlighted as a fairly good news story. One member made reference to a lot of surface delamination, mainly on estate roads, and highlighted this as an issue.

Following a discussion on an increase in the total crime in Dorset, officers highlighted the seasonal adjustment and a number of big events that happened in Dorset which might inadvertently skew the figures.

In response to a question regarding coercion, the Strategic, Insight, Intelligence and Performance Manager undertook to look into this and add more clarity in future reports.

One member highlighted the direction of travel within the report and the Strategic, Insight, Intelligence and Performance Manager undertook to make the numbers clearer in future reports. It was noted that at a recent meeting of the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee a number of notes had been made to

improve this report going forward to the new Council. The intention was to try and localise these reports also.

In response to a question about the parameters of the medium, the Strategic, Insight, Intelligence and Performance Manager advised that this was set by people that contributed to the reports in their professional judgements. This would also be looked as part of the review process. He added that as part of LGR his team were looking at the risk management process.

Noted

Work Programme

8 The Committee considered its Work Programme.

Members were advised that the Shadow Executive and Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been informed of the work undertaken by the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee over the last 2 years. They had also been advised of topics that could benefit from further and ongoing consideration. It was recommended that the Shadow Council be notified of the following:-

- Personal Independent Payments (PIP)
- Universal Benefits
- Children Out of School (i.e. children missing education and school exclusions)
- Domestic Abuse
- Delayed Transfers of Care

Following discussion one member felt that a general observation for the end of the first year of the new Council would be to look at the impact on service users of the change as a result of LGR.

It was also agreed that following the update from the PCC a wider look at vulnerability across the area, could be relevant. Neglect could also be an area to be looked at.

Members felt that the impact of the closure of youth centres needed to be looked at by the new Council. It would be helpful to look at the whole picture, not just specific areas, and how the gap around the county had been filled and the sustainability of this.

Resolved

That the Shadow Council be asked to look at the following areas in addition to Personal Independent Payments (PIP), Universal Benefits, Children Out of School (i.e. children missing education and school exclusions), Domestic Abuse and Delayed Transfers of Care:-

- The impact on services users as a result of LGR
- Vulnerability
- Neglect; and
- The impact of the closure of youth centres.

Questions from County Councillors

9 No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20(2).

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 11.35 am