



People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Colliton Park,
Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ on Wednesday, 10 January 2018.

Present:

Mary Penfold (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)
Graham Carr-Jones, Katharine Garcia, Andrew Parry, Byron Quayle and Clare Sutton.

Members Attending

Steve Butler, Cabinet Member for Safeguarding
Deborah Croney, Cabinet Member for Economy, Education, Learning and Skills
Jill Haynes, Cabinet Member for Health and Care
Rebecca Knox, Leader of the Council
Daryl Turner, Cabinet Member for Natural and Built Environment
Pauline Batstone, Chairman of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Kate Wheller, Member of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Officers Attending: John Alexander (Senior Assurance Manager - Performance), Helen Coombes (Transformation Programme Lead for the Adult and Community Forward Together Programme), Steve Hedges (Group Finance Manager), Nick Jarman (Interim Director for Children's Services), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance) and Helen Whitby (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

For certain items, as appropriate

Diana Balsom (Commissioning Manager, Housing and Prevention), Ed Denham (School Admissions Manager), Katie Lowe (Commissioning and Contracts Manager) and Steph Lyons (Commissioning Manager).

(Notes: 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 People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on **Wednesday, 21 March 2018.**)

Apologies for Absence

1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Derek Beer, William Trite and David Walsh.

Code of Conduct

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

Minutes

3 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2017 were confirmed and signed.

Progress on Matters Raised at Previous Meetings

4 The Committee considered a report by the Transformation Programme Lead for Adult and Community Forward Together Programme which set out outstanding actions from previous meetings and an update on identified reviews.

Dorset Syrian Refugee Programme

Members had been sent an update by email on 11 December 2017. The Lead

Member for the review stated that on the basis of the information provided, and the need to prioritise future reviews, there was no need to progress this review at this time. This was agreed.

Dorset Education Performance

The review had been delayed because of the Lead Member's ill health. It would now go ahead in February 2018.

SEND Budget

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Education, Learning and Skills explained that at a recent meeting pressure to improve delivery of Education Health Care Plans continued. The next performance figures were expected at the end of January 2018. Good outcomes would be reported later in the school term.

Workforce Capacity

Work was progressing and a report would be considered in March 2018.

Integrated Transport

The review was being progressed.

Mental Health Workshop

The workshop had been held on 13 December 2017 and a full report would be provided for the March 2018 meeting. A number of issues had arisen on the day including access to services, housing and benefits, commissioning and the need for safe places.

Delayed Transfers of Care

This item had been added to the Committee's work programme. Significant pressures were being experienced in local acute and community hospitals. Up to the beginning of the week the social care department was tracking below target although NHS delays were not performing so well. Cases of flu were increasing and this was starting to affect the system. A full report would be provided to the March 2018 meeting.

Race and Hate Crime

The Lead Member referred to current evidence which showed a downward trend and did not think there was any reason for a review to continue. Should incidents increase then this decision could be reviewed. The Lead Officer agreed with this view. Attention was drawn to the number of other agencies monitoring such cases which provided some assurance for the Committee.

In light of this, members agreed that the review should not progress further.

Social inclusion

The findings of this review would be reported to the June 2018 meeting. The Lead Officer for the review added that many partner organisations were contributing to the review and that future meetings were being outside of County Hall.

Homelessness

The Lead Member had not received any information as requested at the last meeting and that a recent email had suggested that responsibility for homelessness lay with district and borough councils. The Transformation Programme Lead for Adult and Community Forward Together Programme apologised for the lack of information and reminded members that they had asked for a better understanding of how the Council worked with district and borough councils, the new Act, and adult and children's services. She undertook to arrange for the appropriate information to be provided.

Members noted that Dorset Councils Partnership was holding a homeless reduction briefing on 31 January 2018 for its members and that other members would be welcome to attend. It was also reported that East Dorset and West Dorset Councils were holding similar briefings.

Brexit

Terms of Reference were being drawn up.

Noted

Public Participation

5 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).

Admission Arrangements 2019-2020 and Transport Policy 2018-2019

- 6 The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director for Children's Services which summarised the results of the statutory consultation the Council had undertaken for the admission arrangements for 2019-20, the transport policy for 2018-19 and a proposed change to the Published Admission Number for Charmouth Primary School.

The Council consulted annually on admission arrangements for voluntary controlled and community schools before any changes were determined. Voluntary Aided schools and Academies were their own admission authorities and would go through a similar process. The Committee then considered the individual elements contained within the report.

Admissions Arrangements

No significant changes were proposed and the Committee agreed to recommend these to the Cabinet for formal agreement.

Home to School Transport Assistance Eligibility Policy

The proposed changes aimed to make entitlement clearer for families to understand. Members were reminded that a series of incremental rises for Post 16 transport were agreed two years ago. The increase in a surplus seat price from £640 to £770 from September 2018 had been consulted upon and a likely increase in 2019 in line with the tender index for transport as advised by Dorset Travel was highlighted for consultation in April 2018. It was noted that families in receipt of working families tax credit or free school meals would be eligible for a 50% discount. The increases had been reviewed by Dorset Travel for consistency, were competitive with other councils, and were progressing towards cost recovery.

Whilst members supported the need for policies to be clear and understandable, views were expressed about the proposed increases. These included concerns about travel distances for children on Portland, that the lack of assistance meant that more families were choosing to home educate which meant that children were further disadvantaged; a need for a good communications plan to explain the reasoning behind any increases; any increase to take into account the use of taxis or one-off provision; that any increase might result in more parents driving their children to school, thus increasing congestion and impacting on cost recovery; and that a decision should be delayed pending further information being sought, given the concerns expressed.

It was suggested that any increase should not be more than inflation but this was balanced by a view that if this was the case then a similar decision about increases would be needed in subsequent years; and that it would have been helpful if the report had included how figures were calculated by Dorset Transport, how many pupils would be affected and safeguards for those most at risk.

The Interim Director for Children's Services referred to the Children's Services budget and the need to address a £7m funding gap with a significant part being attributed to home to school transport. If the increases were not agreed, then any shortfall would have a serious impact on the Council's budget and would have to be found from elsewhere, resulting in equally difficult decisions needing to be made in other areas of spend.

The Cabinet Member for the Natural and Built Environment drew attention to the fact that there had been little consultation with the Head of Transport prior to the report's publication and that any impact on commercial routes because of the proposed changes needed to be addressed.

Transport Catchment Area for the Swanage School

The proposed change would give the Swanage School an identified transport catchment area and bring it into line with other secondary schools. Members noted that the proposed change was part of a wider review currently being undertaken across Dorset.

3 or 5 Mile Criteria for the reduction of 50% for contribution to Post 16 Transport

The change of the criteria from 5 to 3 miles was proposed to bring it in line with the criteria for Key Stages 3 and 4. The change would result in an additional cost of £70k.

A member commented that the reduction might result in greater uptake of available places.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Care, whilst recognising the problem facing those needing to access further education in rural areas, was concerned about the additional cost and, given the current pressures on the Children's Services budget, where this would be found. The Interim Director for Children's Services explained that the cost would be added to the home to school transport savings of £483k already identified and that this would have to be found from within the budget.

Pupil Admission Number (PAN) for Charmouth Primary School

Charmouth Primary School currently had a PAN of 25 but was suffering from low numbers. A reduction to 15 from 2019 onwards would be more efficient and cost effective.

Members were concerned about the school's viability and asked whether it could be used more.

It was explained that the school would be viable, efficient and provide a quality of education for a total of 105 students. Primary school numbers were not as acute now and, should the numbers increase or there be additional housing in the area, then there would be capacity to increase the PAN again. The Interim Director for Children's Services added that although the optimum level for primary schools was 250 students on roll, Dorset had a lot of small, rural schools which were more expensive. Based on the forecasts for births, it looked like demand in the catchment area would decline. If the PAN were retained there would be surplus places and this would result in an unnecessary attenuation of the school's budget. In his view, the reduction was the right option.

Councillor Clare Sutton voted against recommendations 2 and 4 below.

Recommended

That the Cabinet formally agree to the adoption of the following:-

1. Dorset County Council Admissions Arrangements including the Co-ordinated Scheme, the Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2019-20, the Admission of Armed Forces Community Children Policy and the Guidance on the Placement of a Pupil Outside His or Her Normal Age Group, the 6th Form Admissions Policy and the Nursery Admissions Policy.
2. The Home to School Transport Assistance Eligibility Policy for Children and Young People attending School 2018-19 and the Dorset Post 16 Transport Support Policy for 2018-19 which includes a rise in the surplus seat price from £640 to £770. Cabinet is also advised that a cost of £795 will be used for consultation in April 2018 for September 2019 surplus seat/cost recovery charge.
3. Approval of the identification of a transport catchment area for the Swanage School.
4. Approval of the 5 mile criteria for the reduction of 50% for contribution towards Post 16 Transport.
5. Changes to the Pupil Admission Number for Charmouth Primary School reducing from 25 to 15.

Reason for Recommendations

1. To determine admissions arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements including the School Admissions Code December 2014.
2. To ensure compliance with the latest legislation and subsequent regulation/statutory guidance.

Budgets for Adult and Community and Children's Services

- 7 The Committee received a presentation from the Interim Director for Children's Services on the Children's Services budget for 2018/19. He explained that the cost of service delivery for 2018-19 was £66m compared to the available funding of £58m. He then gave a detailed breakdown of proposed identified savings of £6.3m. This resulted in a gap of £1.8m but to meet this shortfall staff would have to change their attitudes, be more disciplined and focused on doing the right things at a faster rate than they were used to.

One member referred to a recent meeting he had attended with fostercarers and asked what was being done to address the concerns they had raised and to avoid a mass exodus. The Interim Director explained that a review of payment rates had been undertaken and these had been brought into line with other authorities. An incentive scheme had also been included so that those achieving qualifications received additional payments as did those fostercarers looking after harder to place children. There was also a need for better customer care for them, for a change in staff attitudes and understanding, and for existing fostercarers to be retained.

Another member, welcomed the additional funding provided to recruit additional social workers but asked what support was given to family members to take on children. The Interim Director explained that staff were actively trying to increase the number of family placements as this provided better continuity for the children.

The Committee then received a presentation on the Adult and Community Services budget for 2018-19 from the Transformation Programme Lead for Adult and Community Forward Together Programme.

Members were reminded that the adult social care budget was the largest within the Council and that the social care precept was ringfenced for spend on adult social care. There would be an increase in the Improved Better Care Fund (IBCF) but there were strict rules as to how this money could be spent and performance managed. Members were also reminded that fees and charges were based on the ability to pay

so that those who could not afford to pay had their services funded.

Savings of £9.3m were needed during 2018-19 and an explanation of how these would be achieved was given. Attention was drawn to the increased number of older people living longer in Dorset and the increased complexity of their needs; the increasing amount of safeguarding work which impacted on the number of assessments and reviews undertaken; and the increased need to undertake more deprivation of liberty cases due to people not planning for their future at an early stage and the implications this had for the service. There was a need for provision of early advice in order to help people make the decisions about their future at an early stage.

She then explained identified savings which she considered achievable but cautioned that if these savings were not realised, then additional savings would have to be made elsewhere.

One member drew attention to the older populations reluctance to apply for attendance allowance as they saw this as a failure or a stigma and asked whether steps were being taken to address this reluctance. More was being invested in the welfare service, and to district councils' revenue and benefits services to inform people about the allowance and of the need to plan for the future. Cllr Jill Haynes, Cabinet Member for Health and Care, added that the Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board would be working more closely with GP Locality Groups on the prevention agenda and talk to people about this.

Another member asked how voluntary organisations were being encouraged. It was explained that they were involved in helping communities to become more enterprising and respond to local need and the Dorset Care Framework was encouraging community organisations to tender for services. These measures, combined with increasing take up of personal budgets would improve markets and give more flexibility.

In response to other questions it was confirmed that current work on social isolation included the superfast broadband team and Age Concern, and that Age UK were involved in some community development work.

The work Tricuro was doing in Weymouth to make better use of its centres was highlighted as was the rising cost of the Council's transport to get people to day centres like the Acorns in Weymouth and the reduction in income that might result. Members were reminded that since 2007 the policy was for people to have individual personal budgets so that they had control of how the money allocated to them could be used for their benefit. The Council was trying to increase awareness of this through use of social media, financial advisers, banks etc.

With regard to potential changes to libraries, one member highlighted the success of the community library in his area and that their experience might help other libraries. Another member emphasised the use of the library in her division as a resource centre. It was recognised that previous changes to library services had been painful but Cllr Deborah Crony, Cabinet Member for Economy, Education, Learning and Skills, recognised the valuable role played by libraries and had already given a commitment that any future strategy would be set out clearly before any steps were taken.

Noted

Outcomes Focused Monitoring Report, January 2018

- 8 The Committee considered a report by the Transformation Programme Lead for Adult and Community Forward Together Programme which set out performance against the 2017-18 Corporate Plan and population indicators for the Healthy and Independent outcomes. The report also included performance measures which showed the Council's services' contribution and impact on outcomes, risk management information relating to outcomes and population indicators, and some value for money information relating to the three service directorates.

Attention was drawn to the suggested areas of focus for the indicators on the inequalities in life expectancy and the rate of hospital admissions related to alcohol related conditions.

Following the last meeting a member had asked for a briefing paper on the rate of hospital admissions for alcohol-related conditions and a brief explanation of the findings was given. Increased drinking affected safeguarding for both children and adults, crime levels, work force absenteeism, and had an impact on the Council's services and outcomes. Many partner organisations had a role in prevention, treatment and safety and the issue formed part of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan which was scrutinised through Dorset's Health and Wellbeing Board. Any improvement in performance would need to be by way of a joined up approach by the organisations involved. One suggested way of increasing take up was by referral at hospitals or by GPs. The paper would be sent to members following the meeting. Other indicators had already been identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and were the subject of current or planned reviews.

Other interrelated or causal factors involved in alcohol misuse were raised which needed to be explored before scarce resources were allocated to any review. Only 25% of the lower quartile were accessing Livewell Dorset, who provided many interventions and that prevalence of mental health conditions was increasing yet spend was being cut by 50%.

The Transformation Programme lead for the Adult and Community Forward Together Programme added that many people using alcohol or substances were not looking for medical intervention and this explained the low take up rates.

Noted

Work Programme

- 9 The Committee considered a report by the Transformation Programme Lead for Adult and Community Forward Together Programme which detailed the updated work programme for 2017-18.

Noted

Questions from County Councillors

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

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 12.35 pm