

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset,
DT1 1XJ on Thursday, 12 October 2017

Present:

Pauline Batstone (Chairman)
Toni Coombs, Kevin Brookes, Beryl Ezzard, Steven Lugg and Bill Pipe

Members Attending

Deborah Croney, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Education, Skills and Learning.

Officer Attending: John Alexander (Senior Assurance Manager - Performance), Sarah Baker (Group Finance Manager), Nicholas Jarman (Interim Director - Children's Services), Cathy Lewis (Communications Officer (Internal)), Patrick Myers (Assistant Director - Design and Development), Simon Parker (County Emergency Planning Officer), Michael Potter (Project Engineer), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance), Jonathan Wade (Acting Assistant Director for Care and Protection), Sally Wernick (Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality - Adults) 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: **Thursday, 18 January 2018**).

Apologies for Absence

37 Apologies for absence were received from Katharine Garcia and Lesley Dedman.

Code of Conduct

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

Minutes

39 The minutes from the meeting held on 6 July 2017 were agreed and signed.

Public Participation

Public Speaking

40 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 on the Inquiry Day in respect of Domestic Abuse

41 The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality - Adults updated members on the progress with the arrangements for the Inquiry Day in respect of Domestic Abuse which would be held on Tuesday 17 October 2017. All of the invitations had now been sent out and a good response to date had been received.

It was explained that the purpose of the day was to identify key lines of enquiry

around domestic abuse and explore them. Although the County Council had no strategic responsibility for domestic abuse this would be an opportunity for members to hear first-hand from a range of people, partners and providers. There would be opportunities for members to ask questions about important issues and decide on their next steps.

The Chairman felt the day would be looking at 4 main areas of abuse, partner abuse, children being abused by carers, parent abuse and elderly abuse. This would be a day on which to begin to explore these areas further.

The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance added that this was active scrutiny and domestic abuse was a key topic contained in the Corporate plan.

One member highlighted that domestic abuse was not an isolated issue but one that needed to be looked at holistically. Early intervention and multi-agency support was important in this area.

Noted

Update from the Task and Finish Group on Road Traffic Collisions

- 42 The Task and Finish Group had met and had agreed to review and update the existing Road Casualty Reduction Plan. The Group had highlighted several new interventions which would be investigated. The aim was not to duplicate documents but to identify new opportunities for new interventions, if possible, and to try to make it easier for members of the public to understand. It was anticipated that there would be a review of all the rural routes across the Authority to provide an objective comparison of all routes to assess where the need was greatest. Road signage would also be reviewed.

They had also recently met with Cabinet member for Natural and Built Environment in order for him to be aware of the work going on.

Cllr Steven Lugg, a member of the Task and Finish Group, emphasised that they had to be realistic about what would make a difference in terms of casualties and people killed.

Noted

Emergency Planning Update

- 43 The County Emergency Planning Manager advised members of the work around member engagement and how this could be improved in times of emergency. He had met with Cllrs Lugg and Brookes and had agreed to offer members the opportunity to have a tour of the Emergency Planning building and receive a short briefing from the officers on their roles and work, following meetings of future overview and scrutiny committee meetings. There would also be an opportunity to offer specialist briefing sessions as required. It was anticipated to create a rolling programme of regular introductory briefs to build on members' knowledge and understanding of emergency planning. The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality – Adults requested that reference to the Trauma Response Service also be included in the briefings

Cllr Kevin Brookes had been looking at the service from the elected member angle and had found that there were well thought out processes in place for the Leader and Chief Executive but it was a bit patchy at other elected member level. He expressed concern that Senior Officers might not be aware of who their relevant cabinet member was and continued to investigate further. He suggested that a skills audit of members be carried to ensure they had the requisite skills.

Cllr Steven Lugg felt there was a need to not be parochial around this and to ensure that all three levels of members (Town, District and County) were involved to ensure that everyone knew what to do in an emergency situation.

One member highlighted the support of the Communications Team in relation to emergency situations as they can happen anywhere at any time.

The County Emergency Planning Officer added that he would welcome a call from any member if they felt they needed a briefing on a particular area.

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality – Adults drew members' attention to the Trauma Centre in respect of modern slavery where a co-ordinated response could be given if required.

Resolved

1. That a rolling programme of member briefings be arranged following the next round of Overview and Scrutiny meetings in January 2018.
2. That updates from the County Emergency Planning Officer be presented to the Committee when required.

Special Educational Needs and Disability - Written Statement of Action

- 44 The Assistant Director for Design and Development updated members on the weaknesses that were highlighted during a Local Area Inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission that had led to the Written Statement of Action being produced.

Dorset was now working on a Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) Strategy and the first meeting of the SEND Delivery Group had recently taken place.

Members were also updated on the progress with Educational Health Plans (EHCPs) and noted that the increase in demand for these Plans had had a direct impact on the ability of casework officers to complete the assessments and plans with the 20 week statutory timescale. Current figures for September 2017 showed that only 6% of new EHCPs were meeting this deadline and as new requests showed no sign of reducing in number, the timelines for finalising further EHCPs was also at risk of not meeting the statutory timescales, on 1 March 2015, there were 1472 EHCPs and this rose to 1597 by March 2016. By March 2017 there were 1832 and at the end of September 2017 there were 1948. Current data predicted a similar trajectory for 2017/18.

Following a question from a member about whether the achievement of 50% of new plans being done by October had been achieved, it was advised that the situation had improved but undertook to circulate this data outside of the meeting.

The impact of this change in legislation affected not just Dorset but nationally and as a result there were now 13 authorities that had written statements of action as they had also not been able to meet the demand.

Members were reminded of the difficulty of recruiting to staff vacancies and made reference to a recent conference that had taken place which highlighted capacity issues. The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Education, Learning and Skills added that both herself and the Leader had written to all Dorset MPs highlighting the increase in demand and finding issues around education needs. She was due to meet with Oliver Letwin shortly to discuss this further. Members felt it would be helpful if they could have sight of the Dorset MP letters to keep them in the picture.

Following a question from a member about the turnaround period for each EHCP, the Assistant Director for Design and Development advised that there was a lot of

attention being given to this work and undertook to provide this granular information outside of the meeting.

Noted

Ofsted updates - Children's Homes and Dorchester Learning Centre

- 45 Members received an update on the action plan in respect of the latest Ofsted findings with regards to Dorset County Council's Children's Homes. The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance highlighted that members needed to be assured that the safeguarding actions in the action plan had been identified and confident that there were actions in place to drive forward the improvements. The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Education, Learning and Skills advised members that at the recent Cabinet meeting members took specific details of the young people, where they went, their transition and progression to ensure that each one was safely transferred.

Members were also updated on the Dorchester Learning Centre which included information on the detailed development plan which had started from the previous Ofsted inspection targets and current priorities e.g. improving leadership and management; attainments and progress of pupils; assessment, tracking and achievement. It was noted that the action points from the advisory visit last year had now been met. The new Head Teacher had engaged with induction and Head Teacher briefings. The last general safeguarding update was favourable and also signposted the effectiveness of the new Head.

Noted

Outcomes Focussed Monitoring Report, October 2017

- 46 The Committee considered a report by the Corporate Director for Children's and Adult and Community Services which was the first monitoring report against the new Corporate Plan. It included Performance measures by which the County Council could measure the contribution and impact of its own services and activities on the Corporate Plan's four outcomes and risk management information.

The Senior Assurance Manager highlighted that the report included an analysis of the Council's contribution towards Corporate Plan outcomes and measured the impact on services and activities. He then gave a detailed presentation as a means of illustrating this. He explained that more detailed information was now available to support scrutiny work and asked members to contact him if there were any areas they believed to be priorities for further development. Value for money information would be provided for the January 2018 meeting.

Members highlighted and discussed the number of killed or seriously injured on Dorset's roads indicator and the number of Looked After Children.

Following a discussion on permanence measures for children, the Acting Assistant Director for Care and Protection undertook to provide members with information relating to the number of children placed with relatives within their family network.

In respect of Looked After Children the Interim Director for Children's Services highlighted the importance of early intervention with families showing signs of distress to prevent a child becoming looked after. He also highlighted the importance of manageable caseloads and attracting good quality social workers in this regard.

One member suggested that if managing caseloads was so critical it should perhaps be one of the performance measures included in the report. She also made reference to the 'grow your own' joint work with Bournemouth University in respect of Social

Workers and asked for a report back to this Committee on the progress of this work.

In response to a question about high caseloads and the need to achieve savings, the Interim Director for Children's Services made reference to opportunities to try to improving commissioning arrangements and to reducing third party payments.

The Senior Assurance Manager welcomed any comments and feedback from members by 30 October 2017 in readiness for the next report in January 2018.

Resolved

That a report on the joint work with Bournemouth University on social workers be prepared for the meeting on 18 January 2018.

Work Programme

47 The Committee considered its work programme and gave consideration to the inclusion of a number of items which had been discussed earlier in the meeting:-

- Update from the Task and Finish Group on road traffic casualties at an appropriate time
- A report on the joint work with Bournemouth University in relation to social workers
- Further work on Population indicators in respect of the Outcomes Focussed Monitoring Report

The Chairman suggested that there might well be workstreams arising from the Domestic Abuse Inquiry Day.

Resolved

That the Committee's Work Programme be updated accordingly.

Questions from County Councillors

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

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 11.40 am