

DORSET COUNCIL - PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2019

Present: Cllrs Jane Somper (Chairman), Mary Penfold (Vice-Chairman), Toni Coombs, Stella Jones, Emma Parker, Mark Roberts, Maria Roe and Gill Taylor

Apologies: Cllrs Molly Rennie and Clare Sutton

Also present: Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Laura Miller, Cllr Andrew Parry and Barrie Crook (Independent Chair of Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board)

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Mark Blackman (Assistant Director - Schools and Learning), Andrea Breen (Head of Specialist Services), Rebecca Kirk (Corporate Director of Housing, Dorset Council), Sarah Parker (Executive Director of People - Children), Karen Maher (Business Manager - Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), Paul Beecroft (Communications Team), Lee Ellis (Scrutiny Officer) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

18. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Roberts declared an interest as a contractor for adult services to Dorset Council.

20. Public Participation

There were no representations from town or parish councils or from members of the public.

21. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

22. Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2018/19

The Independent Chair of the Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board, Barrie Crook, attended the meeting to present the Board's annual report, which provided an overview of how the Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board had carried out its duties during 2018/19 to prevent the abuse and neglect of

adults with care and support needs. Mr Crook noted that it was important for the scrutiny committee to consider the report as Dorset Council provided the strategic lead to the Board with three statutory duties – to provide an annual strategic plan, an annual report and to commission safeguarding adult reviews. The Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board worked closely with the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Board although it was noted that these arrangements were currently under review.

The committee was provided with an overview of the role and work of the Board and information on its four strategic aims, examples of work undertaken, an independent audit that had been undertaken and significant changes in practice that had occurred as a result of this and links to the Safeguarding Children's Board. Current issues for the Board included a focus on continuing work on domestic abuse, county lines and exploitation and neglect. Key issues for Dorset included the resilience and viability of the board and funding levels, as it was noted that the Safeguarding Children's Board received a higher level of funding.

Members considered the issues arising from the report and during discussion the following points were raised:

- Reference was made to a particular incident and it was noted that as a result of the case, a shared learning group had been established in order to provide a link and shared learning between Adults and Children's Services
- In response to a point raised, the importance of councillors receiving feedback on any referrals made (where confidentiality allowed) was acknowledged, in order to confirm if it was an appropriate referral and/or whether any further action was required
- In respect of ensuring that information reached 'hard to reach' and the most vulnerable people, the Board's Business Manager provided an overview of events attended by the team and the availability of posters and leaflets online that could be used by councillors in order to disseminate information
- A representative of the voluntary sector now sat on the Board which provided contact with other voluntary organisations
- Liaison was also undertaken with housing associations
- A discussion was held with regard to the 'Safeguarding Activity and Performance Information 2018/19' contained within the report and the role and responsibility of organisations to ensure that a person's stay in residential provision was safe. Reference was made to the role of the family in these circumstances and the role of the council in holding partners to account to ensure that care homes were safe places. The role of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) was also noted
- Reference was made to the 'source of risk'
- In response to a question, the Chairman of the Safeguarding Adults Board reported that the CQC had been invited to a meeting of the Board in June where they had been challenged on data provided. The Board maintained a dialogue with the CQC although it was recognised that the CQC had overall responsibility for ensuring

standards of care in private organisations. The Chairman of the Board confirmed that he would give further consideration to the role that the Board could have in conjunction with the CQC and in providing information to relatives, and provide further information to committee members following the meeting

- A suggestion was made that the Board liaise with Councillor Molly Rennie with her interest in Domestic Violence and Abuse issues
- A report following the review of the Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board arrangements would be presented to the Board towards the end of the year. The Chairman asked that a copy of the report be provided to members of the People Scrutiny Committee at the appropriate time in order to provide committee members with the opportunity to make comments as relevant.

23. Report of the Monitoring Officer on an investigation by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Councillors considered a report of the Monitoring Officer that had been produced for Cabinet on 1 October 2019, following the publication of findings by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in relation to the Special Education Needs Service and failings by the former Dorset County Council. In presenting the report, the Monitoring Officer noted that Cabinet had supported all recommendations contained in the report. The committee had the opportunity to review the report and recommendations. The report would also be sent to all other councillors for their information.

The committee considered the contents of the report and during discussion the following points were raised:

- In response to a request to see information on the eight previous investigations, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that this point was covered within the final agreed recommendation, with monitoring of progress made in addressing the outstanding actions and review of the eight previous investigations to be undertaken by reporting to the People Scrutiny Committee and Health and Wellbeing Board
- Support was expressed for continued monitoring in order to embed learning into the organisation and seek assurance that the situation was not repeated. Support was also expressed for progress reports to be brought to this committee
- The Executive Director for People (Children) noted that the issues required a partnership approach, which would take place through discussion at the Health and Wellbeing Board. It was also noted that a progress report would be provided to the People Scrutiny Committee
- A written statement of action had been produced. There was also a programme of work to look at how improvements could be made to improve the experience of people going through the process to ensure better outcomes for young people and further work with schools
- An explanation was provided of the two types of placement and it was noted that a placement must be registered if operating on a

full-time basis. The council's ambition would be to use registered providers but may consider alternative provision for other arrangements. The council worked with a number of providers who were seeking to become registered

- A question was raised with regard to the eight previous reports and whether actions had been undertaken? In response, the Monitoring Officer noted that this provided an opportunity to review the eight reports and ascertain whether actions had been taken. There was no implication at this stage that the actions had not been completed. It was noted that the Corporate Complaints Team worked with the Ombudsman to ensure that required actions were undertaken. In addition, there was a planned programme of audit by the South West Audit Partnership, where priority areas would be identified
- The Executive Director for People (Children) reported that significant changes had been made within the service since herself and the Corporate Director – Education and Learning had come into post, with additional processes having been put into place and work undertaken to review individual cases looking at the quality of service and outcomes for children. This would inform work moving forward and ensure that themes continued to be addressed
- Particular questions were raised with regard to the circumstances around the cases. The Corporate Director noted that the Ombudsman had focused on repeated patterns. The Monitoring Officer added that the Ombudsman had been careful to ensure that the report was anonymous
- In response to a question, the Corporate Director assured the committee that the council was working hard to understand the situation with all children and to improve relationships and the flow of information with schools
- A discussion was held with regard to links with schools and it was noted that there were different rules for different types of schools, in terms of the requirement to notify the council of issues, although most schools did provide notification in relevant situations
- Reference was made to the work of the council's attendance team who worked in areas of longer term persistent absence and further development that was to be undertaken in this area
- The Chairman noted the importance of building up good relationships with parents and the community
- A further report was to be provided for the Health and Wellbeing Board on 30 October 2019 and the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Early Help noted that the committee could review this and in addition, welcomed comments from councillors on the blueprint for change consultation currently underway
- The Chairman made reference to the blueprint for change consultation and noted that it was encouraging to see the proposals in order to ensure the best possible outcomes for children
- The Monitoring Officer reported that he would be writing to the 72 non-executive councillors and including a copy of the Cabinet report, and including the minute extracts of the Cabinet and People

Scrutiny Committee consideration of the report. In addition, he noted that when a progress report was provided, this would include detail of all actions from the previous cases referred to

- The Portfolio Holder noted that once the committee had considered an update report on this issue, councillors could consider whether any further action was required.

24. People Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

The Scrutiny Officer provided an overview of the items on the committee's work programme and comments were made / items added to the work programme as follows:

- A further report with regard to the Domestic Violence and Abuse Contract to be presented to committee in September 2020
- Report to be produced for Health and Wellbeing Board on 30 October 2019, to be sent to members of the committee to review and comments as to whether further action is required
- It was noted that an Executive Advisory Panel had been set up to look at social mobility and poverty issues
- Investigation of the council's youth offer – incorporating withdrawal of youth clubs funding and links with Anti-Social Behaviour – report from the Executive Director – People (Children's) to understand what is proposed in the Blueprint for change to meeting on 7 January 2020
- Transition of young people with SEND into adult services – initial report to be presented to committee
- Councillor Roberts provided an overview of his request for the committee to look at Adult Care – direct payments and it was agreed that an initial report be presented to the committee
- It was noted that Councillor Sutton was content with the response provided following her scrutiny request for a review of the Homelessness and Emergency Assistance Fund
- Children's Safeguarding Annual Report – Cllrs Roberts, Penfold, Roe and Jones, to review the report and provide comments to Cabinet in December and feedback to People Scrutiny Committee in January 2020
- An issue with regard to secondary education in Weymouth and Portland had been raised by Councillor Sutton. It was agreed that a review focusing on schools across Dorset should be considered relating to the impact with the change in the Ofsted approach/emphasis and reflecting on whether there was a pattern across Dorset

25. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.50 am

Chairman

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