

**Minutes of the meeting of the  
Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
held on 6 January 2015**

**Present**

**Members:**

Councillor Mike Brain  
Councillor Jonathan Chilvers  
Councillor Bob Hicks (Chair)  
Councillor Julie Jackson (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Dave Parsons  
Councillor Clive Rickhards (substituting for Councillor John Whitehouse)  
Councillor Jenny St. John  
Councillor Angela Warner  
Councillor Chris Williams

**Other Councillors:**

Councillor Colin Hayfield, Portfolio Holder, Education and Learning  
Councillor Bob Stevens, Portfolio Holder, Health

**Officers:**

Elizabeth Abbott, Business Partner (Planning, Performance and Improvement)  
Georgina Atkinson, Democratic Services Team Leader  
Jenny Butlin-Moran, Service Manager (Professional, Practice and Governance Unit)  
John Dixon, Interim Strategic Director (People Group)  
Monica Fogarty, Strategic Director (Communities)  
Sheila Meakin, Service Manager (People Group)  
Nigel Minns, Head of Learning and Achievement  
Ben Patel-Sadler, Democratic Services Officer  
Sue Ross, Interim Head of Service (People Group)  
Kate Sullivan, HR Consultant

**Other representatives:**

Joseph Cannon, Church representative

**Members of the public:**

Laura Kisby, ATL Joint Branch Secretary (Warwickshire)  
X1 Member of the public

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**1. General**

**(1) Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Dave Shilton, Councillor John Whitehouse (who was substituted by Councillor Clive Rickhards), Chris Smart, John McRoberts and Diana Turner

**(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest**

Councillor Jackson declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that she was a governor at Oakwood Academy which has a nursery; that she was a trustee for the Nicholas Chamberlaine Schools Foundation. She also had a relative with a disability.

Councillor Hicks declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that his daughter was employed at St Michael's School and that this daughter-in-law was employed at Stockingford School. He was also a lifetime Vice President of MENCAP.

Councillor Parsons declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that he was a governor at Nethersoles Church of England Academy, Polesworth, and that his son was a teacher at The Croft Primary School.

Councillor Angela Warner declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that she was a non-executive director of the South Warwickshire Foundation NHS Trust.

Councillor Brain declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that he was a Governor of Quinton Primary School.

Councillor Bob Stevens declared an interest; the nature of the interest being that he was governor of Southam College.

**(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2014**

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014 be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

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The Chair and members of the Committee wished to place on record their appreciation and thanks to Wendy Fabbro (former Strategic Director, People Group) for the amount and quality of her work undertaken whilst employed by the Council.

The Chair then welcomed John Dixon, Interim Strategic Director (People Group) to his role. The Committee looked forward to working with Mr Dixon.

**2. Public Question Time**

There had been no questions submitted to the Committee on this occasion.

**3. Questions to Cabinet and Portfolio Holders**

A question was raised in relation to the Time to Talk Strategy. Time to Talk speech and language therapists were part of the Warwickshire pre-school speech and language therapy team within the NHS. The team supported children and their families from 0-5 years by working with children whose speech, language and communication skills were delayed.

As the Time to Talk Strategy had not been included in the tenders for Children's Centres that had been received by the Council, Councillor Chilvers sought assurance that it would be delivered by the Children's Centres and requested clarification on the timescales associated with this.

Councillor Bob Stevens, Portfolio Holder, Health, agreed to provide the Committee with the requested information.

**4. Multi-Agency Safeguarding**

The Committee received a verbal update from Sue Ross, Interim Head of Service (People Group), on the progress of the formation of a multi-agency approach to responding to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). She advised that a pilot Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was in the process of being set up at the Justice Centre in Leamington. The MASH would be run by police, health and Council staff members.

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Members were informed that the way in which CSE referrals are dealt with and managed was changing following the Jay Report into CSE in Rotherham.

Councillor Bob Stevens explained that the formation of the MASH was at a formative stage and talks were ongoing between the Council and the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). MASH's had varying levels of success across the country and Councillor Stevens believed that the formation of a Select Committee at this time would be extremely useful to influence the structure of the MASH in Leamington and to ensure that the County was dealing with and managing CSE effectively.

The Committee was informed that the MASH in Leamington would cater for the entire County when dealing with instances of CSE. The centre would deal with all initial referrals from across Warwickshire, with the follow up work being allocated back to the relevant district/area.

Staff working at the Leamington site would also investigate any possible links when a case was referred to them. This would involve the team looking at factors such as children who have been missing from home and places/establishments where these children may be frequenting - nightclubs, taxi firms, hotels, etc. It would be important to identify any correlation between examples of CSE and certain businesses, locations and individuals.

Members were informed that the County Council was a member of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB). It was Sue Ross's understanding that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee's aim in forming a Select Committee was to assure itself that the Council's responses to CSE were adequate.

The Committee expressed the view that they wished to form a Select Committee to discuss the safeguarding function outlined in the WSCB annual report which had been presented to members in November 2014. The WSCB annual report had been informative, but members were looking for additional information and clarification around CSE and the protocols that were in place to address it. A Select Committee was seen as the most appropriate option to gather and collate responses from partners.

In response to a question raised, members were assured that historical allegations of CSE were being addressed by the Council. This was a very time consuming area of work, partly due to the requirement to be compliant with data protection legislation. Data protection protocols were difficult to confirm when working with partner organisations. Historical cases could also prove to be challenging because of the age of the information provided to officers. However, the raising of historical

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allegations of CSE had now become an emerging trend for Warwickshire County Council.

Sue Ross confirmed that once the MASH in Leamington had been formed, certain staff may be allocated to work exclusively on historical cases of CSE.

Councillor Bob Hicks informed the Committee that he was happy to progress with the Select Committee approach and hoped that the meeting would have taken place in February/March 2015.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the verbal update.

**4. Performance of the Independent Reviewing Service**

Jenny Butlin-Moran, Service Manager (Professional, Practice and Governance Unit), introduced the report and drew the Committee's attention to the current number of Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) working for the Council along with the work they carried out on a regional and national basis.

The Committee was informed that the high number of cases being dealt with by IROs in Warwickshire was not unique – this was reflected by local authorities from across the country.

Jenny Butlin-Moran drew Members' attention to the positive performance of Warwickshire's IRO service in comparison to the England average – despite the current challenges that were being faced.

The Committee noted that there had been some difficulties in recruiting additional IROs to Warwickshire because of the way in which the salary grading tool used by the Council determined the level of salary for an IRO position. Because the position did not require an IRO to manage a budget or staff, it proved problematic to grade the post at a sufficiently high level of salary to attract new staff to the role. Work was currently being undertaken by the Human Resources (HR) team to monitor interest in the vacant positions. This included speaking with individuals who had received an application pack, but had decided not to go ahead and apply for a position and their reasons for this.

In response to a concern raised, members were informed that the Council's grading tool is not solely used for the IRO position and is used to grade all posts across the Council. Altering the tool to raise the salaries offered to IRO would have implications for other posts across the Council and could potentially increase the Council's wage bill.

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Officers would explore how other local authorities were able to offer higher salaries to their IROs.

Members were informed that a market forces application was being prepared in an attempt to raise the offered salaries to potential IRO applicants in Warwickshire on a short term basis. This would not be a long term solution however and the Professional Practice and Governance Business Unit and Human Resources were considering ways in which to resolve the recruitment issues. A potential option being looked at was to recruit candidates to the role from within the organisation.

The Committee expressed concern about the high number of cases that were being managed by each IRO in Warwickshire. Jenny Butlin-Moran advised that benchmarking data to compare the number of caseloads being managed by local authorities nationally, was not available. She explained that the way that each authority managed this area of business varied greatly; therefore it was very difficult to benchmark against other authorities. Even if the existing vacant posts in Warwickshire were filled, each IRO would still be required to manage a large number of cases – members were informed that this would always be a very busy service due to the nature of its work. The Independent Reviewing Service may produce a business case if it was considered necessary to recruit additional IRO to manage caseloads effectively.

John Dixon, Interim Strategic Director (People Group) explained that the role of an IRO had changed dramatically since 2010 – they were now a crucial part of the authority. Mr Dixon would be working with officers over the next month so that he could inform the Committee on the exact position of the Council's Independent Reviewing Service, including exact details on the specific cases being managed by each IRO

The Committee expressed concern that after twelve months, there were still two vacancies for IROs that had not been filled. The long-term aim was to ensure that each IRO would only be managing 70 cases of looked after children at any one time. Despite the high number of cases being managed by each IRO, members were assured that there were currently sufficient IRO in place to provide adequate protection to the children of Warwickshire.

A comment was raised by a member of the Committee that a review of the staffing numbers should be considered as a matter of urgency.

Members acknowledged the level of skill and responsibility that was required from an IRO – this was a very specialised, senior role and the work undertaken by them was often challenging and demanding. Current retention of Warwickshire's IROs was good.

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The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed:

- 1) To note the performance of the Independent Reviewing Service in Warwickshire and the actions being taken to address the recruitment difficulties; and
- 2) To receive a Briefing Note within one month which would outline the level of pay offered to IROs in Warwickshire and actions being taken to address this. The Briefing Note would also include specific details on the workload of IROs and the effect of staffing levels; and
- 3) That the motion raised by Councillor Julie Jackson and seconded by Councillor Clive Rickhards be actioned and noted. Councillor Jackson proposed that Cabinet Member Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder, Human Resources) and Councillor Bob Stevens (Portfolio Holder, Health) urgently addressed the two vacancies for IROs that existed at the Council. The aim of this motion was to ensure that the Council had the correct number of IROs in place to ensure the safeguarding of all children in Warwickshire. When the vacancies were filled, Jenny Butlin-Moran would determine the staffing requirement once caseloads had been allocated. If it was deemed necessary to recruit additional IROs, a business case would be devised.

**5. Home to School Transport: Update on Review of Provision**

Nigel Minns, Head of Learning and Achievement, introduced the report and outlined potential options to revise or withdraw the non-statutory elements of home to school transport provision and the indicative savings that could be achieved. The total indicative savings of £1.945 million were outlined at paragraph 5.1 of the report.

Members were informed that nationally, Special School Transport was changing so that individual needs were considered, with local authorities making changes to arrangements accordingly.

Officers were keen to offer families a personalised travel allowance. This would provide parents with more flexibility in how they took their children to and from school, with a mileage rate being paid termly in advance. The current rate offered to families was 0.25p per mile. If this was increased to 0.40p per mile, Mr Minns believed that more families would take up the offer of a personalised travel allowance.

The Committee was informed that the cost to the Council of sending children to out of county Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools was significant. The Council was looking to reduce these costs by

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increasing education provision within Warwickshire. Officers would be working with a schools transport expert to evaluate the transport options available to the Council.

Members acknowledged that due to the impact on parents and children, changes to Home to School Transport may be phased over time and therefore could take a number of years to implement.

In response to a question raised, Nigel Minns advised that the options presented in the report were the initial stages of the review process. Appropriate consultation would be undertaken with users of the service once the proposed options had been agreed by Cabinet.

The Committee would have a role to play as this process continued. Councillor Julie Jackson believed that parents of children who chose to send their children to a grammar or denomination school must be aware that because they have made that choice, they should bear some responsibility in ensuring that their child is able to travel to this chosen school.

The Committee believed that the main priority for the Council when considering the potential options for Home to School Transport was to ensure that each child in Warwickshire has access to a good or outstanding school.

Members acknowledged that because this report outlined only the initial stages of the entire process, it would not be possible to include any potential savings in the February 2015 Council budget.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to:

- 1) Note the Council's legal obligations to provide home to school transport;
- 2) Note and comment on the non-statutory elements of home to school transport provision which could be revised or withdrawn.
- 3) Note the indicative savings which could be made by withdrawing the various elements and;
- 4) Request that the Committee be updated on a regular basis on the progress of the review of provision of Home to School Transport. The comments made by members of the Committee in relation to the report would be shared with Cabinet when they were formally considering the options available to them.



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**6. Achievement of Warwickshire Children and Young People in National Tests in 2014**

Nigel Minns explained to members that individual schools' results had not yet been published – it was anticipated that they would be published in a few weeks time.

Because the Department for Education (DfE) had changed the reporting arrangements for GCSEs, it was difficult to compare and identify trends. Nigel Minns explained that this method of reporting resulted in the schools' and pupils' results looking rather different. The 2014 data reflected school level performance and not all the qualifications achieved by individual pupils. Many pupils would leave Year 11 with more qualifications than would be included against their schools performance as a result of the national reforms.

The Committee expressed the view that it was unhelpful for the GCSE reporting methods to be changed as there was no feasible way of identifying any patterns and trends. Members acknowledged that a gap still existed between the north and south of the county in terms of educational attainment and it remained a priority for this gap to be narrowed. It was also the Committee's opinion that more should be done to raise the attainment of Warwickshire's disadvantaged children.

Nigel Minns informed the Committee that overall, schools and pupils in Warwickshire were performing well when compared with their statistical neighbours – it was a positive picture for the year 2013/14. However, Mr Minns had serious concerns about the performance of disadvantaged children which had been raised with OFSTED. The Council was working with other authorities to identify examples of best practice in raising the attainment of disadvantaged children. Mr Minns also acknowledged that individual schools had a responsibility to ensure all children were given the appropriate support and guidance to succeed.

In response to a question raised, members were informed that schools held data regarding the achievements of individual pupils (it was not published as a matter of routine).

A concern was raised that the number and frequency of examinations placed a great deal of pressure on pupils. Members queried the validity of the examination data because of this pressure. Mr Minns explained that nationally, this was the measure used and so it was correct for Warwickshire to use this data to assess the performance of schools and their pupils. In some cases, repeated entry examinations had served to assist disadvantaged children to raise their educational attainment.

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The Committee discussed the relationship between Academies and the Council. Because Academies had no statutory requirement to report to the Council (including their levels of pupil attainment), members expressed the view that it was their own responsibility to take an interest in Academies in their areas and build effective working relationships. Officers from the Council were also looking to forge and maintain good relationships with independent Academies and schools.

Members expressed the view that diminishing resources meant that Councils no longer had the means to provide schools with a 'critical friend'. To this end, it would be important for members to support school governors as much as possible in their roles of holding individual schools to account for their performance.

In relation to school improvement, Councillor Bob Hicks suggested that the Committee may wish to assist the Council's school improvement team by offering to meet with representatives from underperforming schools.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the performance of children and young people in Warwickshire schools in national tests.

**7. Work Programme 2014/15**

The Chair presented the Committee with the proposed Work Programme for 2014/15.

Councillor Jenny St. John referred to the Briefing Note on Children's Centre Providers and considered that this had focused on the social responsibility, rather than social value, element of the procurement process.

The Chair informed the Committee that the following dates had been confirmed in relation to the final report of the Transition of Children to Adult Mental Health Services Task and Finish Group:

24<sup>th</sup> February 2015: Joint meeting to be held between the Children and Young People and Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees to discuss the report of the Task and Finish Group.

12<sup>th</sup> March 2015: Report of the Task and Finish Group to be tabled at Cabinet.

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24<sup>th</sup> March 2015: Report of the Task and Finish Group to be tabled at the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board. Following this, the report will then be circulated to health Commissioners.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to:

- 1) Approve the updated Work Programme for 2015.
- 2) Note the summary document following a visit by members to the Skills Show on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014.
- 3) Note the update on recommendations and actions previously agreed.
- 4) Note the dates associated with the final report of the Transition of Children to Adult Mental Health Services Task and Finish Group.
- 5) Extend an invitation to Stockingford and St Michaels Children's Centres to attend the Committee meeting taking place on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015.
- 6) Request that Portfolio Holders ensure that outstanding items on the Work Programme are progressed at the earliest possible opportunity.

**9. One Organisational Plan Mid – Year Progress Report: April – September 2014**

Elizabeth Abbott, Business Partner (Planning, Performance and Improvement) introduced the report and informed members that 48% of all the supporting Key Business Outcomes would achieve the targets set. 42% of other targets were in the amber category, with a further 10% of targets in the red category.

The Committee noted that there would be a 2% overall underspend from Children's Services.

Members queried the £5 million overspend in relation to out of county placements. Nigel Minns explained to members that the original budget was set with the expectation of an overspend in this area of business. There would be a report tabled at the next meeting of the Schools Forum which would outline the Council's aim of reducing out of county placements.

Members were informed that although the number of looked after children had begun to rise (due to young children coming into care

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through the courts), the Council was aiming to reduce this number in the future.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers believed that the detailed analysis of looked after children was useful. Although the targets outlined in the One Organisational Plan (OOP) were outside of the Committee's direct control, Councillor Chilvers acknowledged that the figures quoted in the OOP report proved to be relevant when comparing numbers of looked after children with comparative authorities.

**10. Any Urgent Items**

None

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the next meeting had been scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015, commencing 10.00am in Committee Room 2, Shire Hall, Warwick.

Members also noted the date of the joint meeting of the Children and Young People and Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees that would be taking place on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015. Further details would be circulated to members closer to the time of the meeting.

The Committee rose at 12.20 p.m.

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Chair