

**MINUTES OF RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 13
OCTOBER 2016**

Present:

Councillor Benson (in the Chair)

Councillors

Critchley	O'Hara	Stansfield	L Taylor
Humphreys	Scott	Singleton	

Mrs Frances McErlane, Co-opted Member

In Attendance:

Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Secretary (Resilient Communities)

Councillor Maria Kirkland, Cabinet Member for Third Sector Development and Engagement

Councillor Debbie Coleman, Cabinet Assistant (Resilient Communities)

Mr Neil Jack, Chief Executive

Mrs Delyth Curtis, Director of People

Mr David Sanders, Independent Chairman of Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board

Mr Andrew Lowe, Youth Offending Team Manager

Mrs Ruth Henshaw, Delivery Development Officer

Mr Chris Kelly, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser (Scrutiny)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2016

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 September 2016 were signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee noted that there were no applications for public speaking on this occasion.

4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Executive and Cabinet Member decisions within the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary, taken since the last meeting of the Committee.

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Members raised questions in regards to decision number PH54/2016 'Hornby Road and Coopers Way Commissioning Review' and Mrs Curtis, Director of People, advised that the service would remain operated as a seven day service.

A query was raised in relation to decision number PH58/2016 'Tendering for Community Advice and Information Provision' and Councillor Kirkland, Cabinet Member for Third Sector Engagement and Development advised that the tender to provide the independent advice and information service was currently open and that there had been a number of expressions of interest and applications received. Councillor Kirkland advised that she would report the outcome of the tender exercise to the Committee in due course.

With regards to decision number PH62/2016 'Housing Related Support', the Committee questioned the impact of the decommissioned Emergency Direct Access Accommodation provision for young people aged 16 to 24 years old. Mrs Curtis advised that young people would have access to beds through Streetlife.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered and agreed to note the items contained within the Forward Plan, October 2016 – January 2017.

6 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Chairman presented the workplan to the Committee and highlighted the Implementation of Recommendations' table.

The Committee agreed:

1. To approve the Scrutiny Workplan.
2. To note the 'Implementation of Recommendations' table.

7 YOUTH JUSTICE THEMATIC DISCUSSION

Mr Lowe, Youth Offending Team Manager, provided the Committee with a summary presentation of the improvements in the Youth Offending Service since the Full Joint Inspection in 2013, the impact of developments in the sector and the opportunities the developments presented.

It was explained to the Committee that the Youth Offending Team Partnership's vision was to prevent offending and reduce reoffending by young people, through working effectively with partners. Mr Lowe advised Members that there had been significant rises in the number of young people coming into the youth justice system in the past decade as a result of the growth of 'sanction detentions' by the police, which had imposed formal responses to incidents that would have previously attracted an informal response. The impact in

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Blackpool of the rise had been that caseloads became twice the national average and were considered to be a significant barrier to achieving quality and effectiveness in the protection of the public and of young people themselves. It was noted that the result had been a poor inspection outcome from the HM Inspector of Probation in 2009.

In response to the poor inspection, Mr Lowe informed Members that the aims of the Youth Justice Strategy had been to develop processes and services to divert young people with low level offending behaviour away from the youth justice system into informal and voluntary forms of support. The Committee was advised that the success and improved performance of the Partnership could be demonstrated through an 80% reduction in the number of 'first time entrants' into the Youth Justice system in Blackpool.

The Committee was provided with case study examples of the young people the Youth Offending Team had worked with, which helped to illustrate the support that was provided to young people. Members noted the high rate of youth offenders with mental health problems and raised questions regarding what work was undertaken with the particular cohort. Mr Lowe advised that managing the cohort of young offenders with mental health problems was a challenging process, particularly with the transfer from youth to adult services at 16, but that the Youth Offending Team met monthly with the Adult Mental Health Team in order to improve pathways and ensure appropriate care was identified.

Members discussed the provision of sport opportunities and other activities as a potential rehabilitator of young offenders and Mr Lowe informed Members of the wide variety of various activities that were provided around the town, including the Summer Arts College, which were used to divert young people away from offending. Mr Jack, Chief Executive and Chairman of the Youth Offending Team Board, advised the Committee that in the past a lot of focus of the Youth Offending Team Board had been on preventing re-offending, but now the emphasis of work had shifted to prevent first time offending. He informed Members of the work that was being undertaken into how the issues causing young people to offend were addressed, reporting that the focus of Headstart and the work being undertaken with schools were building up a variety of means to engage with young people and prevent them from offending.

The Committee questioned how rates of offending and reoffending compared to other local authorities and Mr Lowe advised that the prevalence of offending and anti-social behaviour by young people in Blackpool was higher than in other areas. However, it was noted that the increased rates were associated with the effects of poverty and deprivation, which were particularly acute problems in Blackpool.

The Committee noted that the 2013 inspection of Blackpool Youth Offending Team had assessed that considerable progress had been made and Members questioned whether there had been any particular areas that had been identified as good practice. Mr Lowe advised that the Team now had a much improved system for identifying victims to engage in the restorative justice process and that the Team had made good use of the grant money that it had received.

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Members considered that the 80% reduction in 'first-time entrants' to the youth justice system committing low-level offences was an impressive achievement, but questioned the reasons for the high rates of re-offending for the young people remaining within the youth justice system remaining static. Mr Lowe explained that the Team had struggled to meet the requirements of the National Standards for Youth Justice when case managers had caseloads of up to 25 cases, which reduced resources in the service to address re-offending by the more serious and persistent offenders. However, as a result of the work undertaken to divert young people with low level offending behaviour away from the youth justice system into informal and voluntary forms of support, caseloads had reduced and the effort that was now focused on more persistent and complex offenders had reduced the frequency of re-offending to a rate below the national average.

The Committee noted further comments that had been made following the 2013 inspection, specifically that 'for the Youth Offending Team to be fully effective, it must be supported by a management board that provided strategic leadership.' Members challenged whether that strategic leadership was now being provided and Mr Jack explained that part of the challenge for the Board in the past had been that the senior officers from partnership agencies had not been attending the meetings. However, changes had been made and Mr Jack considered that the leadership being provided by the Board was as strong and effective as it had ever been.

Members noted that in September 2015 a comprehensive national review of the youth justice system had commenced but that publication of the final report had been delayed following ministerial changes. Questions were raised regarding to the changes to the youth justice system and legislation. Mr Jack advised that his conversations with the Chairman of the Youth Justice Board, Lord McNally, suggested that the outcome was likely to be in line with the expectations of the sector.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Background papers: None.

8 BLACKPOOL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

Mr Sanders, Independent Chairman of Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board, presented the Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report, which provided evidence of the activity of the Board during 2015/2016.

He advised the Committee that the key success during the 2015/2016 year was that the Improvement Plan was lifted in July 2015 and the Safeguarding Children Board resumed its full statutory duties. Mr Sanders reported that another achievement had been overseeing an increasing commitment to the Safeguarding Children Board from Blackpool schools.

The Committee discussed the demographics of Blackpool, which experienced high levels of deprivation and had nearly a third of children living in poverty. It was reported to the

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Committee that Blackpool experienced far higher levels of safeguarding referrals than the England average. Mr Sanders explained to the Committee that it was hoped that the Early Help Strategy and work on the Neglect tool would have an impact in helping to reduce the number of referrals and number of looked after children, as the current numbers were not sustainable with the current resources available. Upon further questioning from Members, Mr Sanders considered that partners needed to find new, smarter ways of working to reduce the number of referrals.

Members were advised of the new Neglect Assessment tool that would be rolled out over the coming year and would enable practitioners to effectively and consistently evaluate the scale of neglect that children in Blackpool experienced.

The Committee questioned when the Early Help Strategy and Neglect tools would be launched and would have an impact. Mr Sanders advised that the Early Help Sub-Group was currently working on the Early Help Strategy, which aimed to ensure quantifiable provision of early help by all agencies who worked with children and families in Blackpool. Mr Sanders advised that it was hoped that the Strategy would be launched soon. With regards to the Neglect tool, Mr Sanders informed Members that it was hoped to be ready in November 2016 and that 25 practitioners had now been trained to be able to train others in using the tool.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the level of appropriate attendance at safeguarding meetings, noting that the report highlighted that the majority of Strategic Board members during the reported period had not met the required threshold for attendance. Mr Sanders advised that he had spoken to all key personnel within the partnership agencies and discussed the issue. He considered that low levels of attendance had not been due to a lack of interest, but had been as a result of officers having other commitments. However, Mr Sanders reported that the issue would continue to be monitored, although there had been recent improvements in attendance levels.

Mr Sanders advised that the end of the reporting period covered by the report marked the halfway period of the current 2015-2017 Business Plan. He advised that the new Business Plan was due to be agreed by the Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board in February 2017. Members considered that the new Business Plan should be presented to the Committee once it had been agreed by the Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board.

The Committee discussed the recent campaign relating to safe sleeping for infants and Mr Sanders advised that before the campaign there had been a number of serious case reviews that had involved child death as a result of babies sleeping in their parents' bed. Members were advised that following the campaign, there had only been one case. Members were provided with details of the campaign and the work that had been undertaken with health visitors and Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board colleagues, in order to achieve the reduction.

The Committee agreed to consider the new Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan following its approval by the Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board.

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Background papers: None.

9 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1 2016/17

Mrs Ruth Henshaw, Delivery Development Officer presented the performance against the Council Plan 2015/2020 for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 and highlighted the key exceptions.

Mrs Henshaw reported that the majority of the Council Plan indicators for 'Resilient Communities' that were due to be considered by the Committee were either annual or bi-annual and therefore could not be reported on for the quarter.

Of the indicators where data was available, it was reported to the Committee that there were three indicators in which performance had deteriorated in Quarter 1 2016/2017:

- Number of referrals / rate of referrals to social care per 10,000 children;
- Number of looked after children / rate of looked after children per 10,000 population; and
- Percentage of children who became subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time.

The Committee noted that all three of the deteriorating indicators had been discussed in detail in recent meetings of the Committee.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

10 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/2016.

The Committee approved the Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/2016.

Background papers: None.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as Thursday, 8 December 2016 commencing at 6pm in Committee Room A, Town Hall, Blackpool.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.40 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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