

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Monday, 20th February, 2012.

Present:- Councillors Abe (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Dar, Davis, Minhas, Munawar, Sharif, Smith and S P Wright

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Coad, Dale-Gough, Dodds, Long, Pantelic, Stokes and Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor O'Connor and Charlie McGeachie

PART 1

63. Declaration of Interest

None.

64. Child Trafficking and Exploitation

The Panel received a presentation from Paul Burnett (Interim Independent Chair, Slough Local Safeguarding Children Board (SLSCB)), Clair Pyper (Strategic Director Education and Children's Services) and Chief Inspector (CI) Jim Reeves (Thames Valley Police (TVP)), introducing the role of the SLSCB, the current position of child trafficking and exploitation in Slough and actions set out in the SLSCB Business Plan for tackling these issues alongside the work of Slough Borough Council (SBC), TVP and Health partners. The Panel was informed that the new SLSCB Business Plan includes child trafficking and exploitation as one of its priorities, recognising the need to test whether all cases were being identified, raising awareness by the public and frontline services. An initial step in this was the development of training and development for staff.

The Panel then raised the issue of the extent of child trafficking and exploitation in Slough and what work was being done to combat it. CI Jim Reeves confirmed that TVP were taking a pro-active approach and that there was a recognised problem in Slough but the ongoing intelligence gathering did not show a significant increase in numbers of reports of trafficked or exploited children and young people. The Panel was also informed that, although the recent Panorama programme highlighted the issue in Slough, there had always been work taking place to address safeguarding concerns. Paul Burnett confirmed that the SLSCB was undertaking work to review the data that it currently held and that this would be completed in the summer 2012, but that currently there was no evidence to suggest that Slough had a greater issue than any other comparative area.

The Panel also requested reassurance that Slough's proximity to Heathrow Airport did not present it with a higher risk of such activity. CI Jim Reeves informed the Panel that information sharing with the Metropolitan Police was

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improving and that the SLSCB was meeting regularly with other Berkshire LSCBs to discuss the situation across the whole of Berkshire.

Members who were in attendance under Rule 30 then raised a number of issues. CI Jim Reeves again stressed that intelligence data completed at the end of 2011 showed no evidence of an increase in or large problem with child trafficking and exploitation in Slough, and Paul Burnett confirmed that the approach of the SLSCB was that even if child trafficking was not as significant as other causes of child abuse, any child or young person needs to be protected and the approach needs to be consistent. Clair Pyper, in response to a question from a Councillor who had made it known he had some information on cases of child trafficking and exploitation, that any information known to impact on the safety of a child should be reported to the Police or Children's Social Care duty desk immediately with any details known. Clair Pyper confirmed that the UKBA and Home Office had guidance for their staff in identifying children and young people who might be victims of trafficking and exploitation. Local agencies in Slough were responsible for taking a co-ordinated approach to identifying cases in Slough, acting on any intelligence received and raising awareness among staff. Attention was then drawn to a series of questions submitted by a Member, attending under Rule 30, and the officer responses which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The questions were put to the Panel and officers repeated their responses. Particular aspects that the Panel noted were the possible link between trafficking and begging, that any individuals with intelligence around cases of trafficking or exploitation should report them to the relevant authorities; that those authorities would base any responses on factual evidence, and that each agency is responsible to have safeguarding training which is monitored.

Resolved –

- 1) that a report would be brought back to the Panel in July providing the results of the first stage of the LSCB actions against the Business Plan in relation to child trafficking and exploitation of the SLSCB; and
- 2) that a report would be brought back regularly (6 monthly) so that the Panel could be updated on the progress made against the business case in terms of child trafficking and exploitation.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm. and closed at 9.45 pm.)