

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 24th October, 2018.

Present:- Councillors Brooker, N Holledge, Matloob, Minhas, A Sandhu and Strutton

Non-Voting Co-opted Members

Alaa Fawaz – Slough Youth Parliament

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Sharif, Kelly and D Parmar
Paul Kassapian

PART 1

11. Election of Chair for the Meeting

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, Councillor Matloob proposed Councillor Brooker take the Chair for the meeting. Councillor A Sandhu seconded this; the Chair was elected unanimously.

Resolved: That Councillor Brooker be appointed Chair for the duration of the meeting.

(At this point, Councillor Brooker took the Chair).

12. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brooker declared his positions as Governor at Churchmead and Ryvers Schools. He also declared his membership of Slough Borough Council's (SBC) Foster Panel and his position as Vice Chair of the Joint Parenting Panel (JPP).

Alaa Fawaz declared her position as an elected representative in the Slough Youth Parliament.

13. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th July 2018

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2018 be approved as a correct record.

14. Action Progress Report

Resolved: That the Action Progress Report be noted.

15. Member Questions

The response regarding the rebuilding of Mariah School was received. Members sought clarification as to how the project had been planned and the handling of the costings submitted by Slough Urban Renewal. As a result,

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further information from the Director of Regeneration on procedures for such work was requested.

Resolved: That further information for the procedures for tendering building projects be given to the Panel by the Director of Regeneration.

16. Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) was a statutory body and therefore its role was bound by law. The Annual Report was being presented in a new format for the first time, and mirrored the manner in which its adult equivalent safeguarding board had reported to the Health Scrutiny Panel on 16th October 2018. The report also contained a series of hyperlinks which could be used to provide further detail.

The foreword highlighted LSCB's overlap with the Adult Safeguarding Board and also the Safer Slough Partnership (SSP). These relationships had also allowed for an increased focus on cohesion and an economy of effort through avoiding duplication. There had also been considerable consideration as to LSCB's objectives, the next steps to take on these and the use of data to identify the focus for effort (e.g. early help, setting thresholds). On the issue of thresholds, a series of seminars with a range of relevant agencies had been held to discuss the appropriate at levels at which they should be set and the impact of requests made by the Slough Children's Services Trust (SCST).

With regard to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), LSCB was keen to stress the broader context of other forms of exploitation in this matter. As a result, the process focused on the range of risks to which children could find themselves subject (e.g. gangs, modern slavery). LSCB had clear and positive policies and procedures on its statutory responsibilities which were enacted across a number of partner agencies.

A training needs analysis had taken place across LSCB's partnerships. This had identified the management of allegations as a key area, with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) having received 178 referrals in 2017 – 18. Whilst this was in line with expectations and the volumes of comparable local authorities, LSCB felt that more could have been received from the local community and voluntary agencies. LSCB had sought information from Berkshire Active regarding the recent stories about football coaching, but this did not highlight any suspected cases in the local area.

Within Slough, LSCB had identified a need to ensure that those involved understood the responsibilities involved. Numbers for private fostering in Slough were also low, potentially suggesting that there may be a need to raise awareness of the issue. Meanwhile, LSCB's communications had been an area of development, with LSCB's Manager having established the website on which she would continue to work to bolster its impact.

LSCB had evaluated the extent to which it was having an impact in Slough. Thematic audits had been conducted and reported back to LSCB on issues

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such as neglect and gangs. These had improved understanding of the key areas of concern. The Slough Strategic Safeguarding Executive Board involved the Police, the Care Commissioning Group and senior officers from SBC. It met every 2 months to co-ordinate activity and develop common processes and clear governance. This had looked at gangs and CSE, and was also having a positive impact on the local picture.

The Serious Case Reviews Sub-Group had examined specific cases. Whilst none of these had been published, learning reviews were undertaken on the incidents; in one case, this had led to the creation of a video on the risks associated with water births. The Child Death Overview Panel had also conducted work, but these involved illnesses or permanent conditions rather than traumatic incidents.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The rise in referrals to LADO in the second half of 2017 – 18 was ascribed to increased awareness. It also allowed for deeper analysis of the local picture.
- Cases where no outcome was recorded could indicate that criminal proceedings had started. The level of 7% was in line with expectations.
- The report on the Safeguarding Adults Board had provided a breakdown of the types of cases involved. Members requested that this be provided in future LSCB reports. This should provide a breakdown of issues such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage and prolonged school absence. On the last matter, the Police had led a campaign on school attendance.
- The referrals regarding modern slavery to LSCB had not met the required threshold to be regarded as such. However, 2 cases had been referred in the week of this meeting and would see strategy discussions held on them.
- It was also acknowledged that any work on issues such as FGM should involve working with communities to engage with them and increase understanding of the importance of the matter. This involved supporting family members to explain to communities in their countries of origin why they would not subject their children to such procedures. The complexity and sensitivity of such questions meant links with community leaders were vital. In addition, midwives and health visitors were helping with the identification and management of cases.
- The Safeguarding Team now had a manager and administrator; this left a Development Manager as the remaining vacancy.
- The Panel raised the question as to whether thresholds were currently too high; this comment had been made by other parties too. However, an overly low threshold could impeded SCST in resolving the most important cases urgently. SCST's data had been analysed and they had been receiving more front door inquiries than neighbouring authorities. An indication that the threshold was not too high was an absence of repeat referrals (which would be expected if cases in need of remedy were being refused). The situation was under constant monitoring given its importance.

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- The high number of referrals could also be attributed to professionals lacking clarity on the criteria. These criteria were being publicised through seminars; in addition, early help was being offered to deal with cases requiring support short of intervention.

Resolved: That the Annual Report be noted.

17. Impact of Curve on Library Services

The Curve had housed library services since 2016; this had also seen provision moved back in house from Essex County Council. The move had also seen provision widen, with the new facility acting as a community hub. Given this, the name of the service had been amended to 'Libraries and Culture' to reflect this. There had been a 47.5% rise in the number of users, whilst some areas had experienced a major improvement (e.g. Summer Reading Challenge completion rate had increased by 136%). The upstairs study area offered a suitable and quiet environment, whilst the ground floor offered performance spaces and had been used by groups such as Beat Routes and Empoword. Opening hours had also been extended by 12.5%, whilst services such as the Registry and exercise for the elderly were on offer.

Primary and secondary schools were involved in the increased provision. Customer feedback had been extremely positive, and the service hoped to build on its work to increase its offer in areas such as health, community cohesion and social isolation.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The service also operated in communities outside the town centre (e.g. Langley, Cippenham). This had the same focus on providing more than a book depository.
- The library service was involved with the Slough Academy to support SBC's apprenticeships scheme. It also offered placements with school work experience programmes.
- Provision at the Curve was better than that offered by many other local authorities and was helping SBC's regional and national profile.
- There had been attempts to encourage reading for pleasure with older pupils. However, the reading groups had mainly attracted younger secondary school children and the initial focus had been on primary schools. This would be an area of future development and SBC were receptive to positive suggestions.
- Figures for visits included those who attending weddings, theatrical performance or other non-library activity. However, the previous library had housed the museum and other attractions so its figures did not solely relate to book use. In addition, all those who attended these other events saw the library as part of their excursion, whilst the figures on reading numbers, book withdrawals and other similar measures indicated that library usage was much increased.

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- WiFi had been modified to ensure that inappropriate usage was not allowed. In addition, users had to use their library cards to log in to avoid anonymous usage.
- Other provision (e.g. sheet music) may be moved to other methods of delivering (e.g. online) depending on level of usage and availability of alternatives.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

18. Slough Youth Parliament

The Slough Youth Parliament (SYP) had been in existence for 4 years, with the second cohort now approaching the end of their terms of office. There had been some initial scepticism regarding the body, but it had now become well established and respected. SYP was also part of the UK Youth Parliament, with an elected representative for Slough on the body.

The third set of elections would be held in January 2019, with schools to act as constituencies. It was very rare to hear of a shortage of candidates for any election, and the resulting election night was a popular and high profile event. Once elected, members were to act as representatives of Slough rather than their school, and the body also included co-opted members to represent other interest groups (e.g. children in care, LGBT).

The 'Make Your Mark' campaign was used to help create SYP's manifesto. This was used to identify the top 5 local and national issues; Slough had the highest rate of involvement in 2017 in England, and whilst national statistics were not yet available the turnout in Slough had increased in 2018. The Slough Youth Awards would also be held for the third time in November 2018, whilst the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) Network was involving schools in sharing best practice and improving curricula.

SYP had representatives on a range of bodies (e.g. Slough Wellbeing Board, Safer Slough Partnership) and these delegates received the necessary support to take an active role in discussions. Its work on challenging the stigma of mental health had also been appreciated by the Care Commissioning Group and Public Health. It had taken a prominent role in advocating for the 'Votes At 16' campaign; as a whole, this level of activity had made SYP a prominent body in the area across the country.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The number of schools involved had increased from 12 to 20, whilst the number of boards on which SYP had representation had increased from 4 to 9. Future issues to build on this progress would be increasing the focus on the local issues identified by 'Make Your Mark' and embedding these in the Manifesto; this would increase the impact of SYP's work and the degree of corporate support for the body.
- The final priorities of SYP were set by those elected to it whilst attending a residential event. As well as 'Make Your Mark', the

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intelligence on priorities gathered during the election process was used but ultimately the final decision lay with the elected members.

- As of yet, no one had graduated from SYP into local or national politics but the ages of those involved militated against this to some extent.
- The body was strictly apolitical in terms of party alignment. Its Question Time events included representatives from a range of parties and candidates did not stand on party tickets.
- Members requested that materials used in the January 2019 elections be circulated to the Panel outside of the meeting.
- SYP included representatives of schools outside Slough with high numbers of local pupils (e.g. Churchmead, Khalsa). The rule was that all could vote, but representatives had to live in Slough (this stipulation also applied to Slough schools).

Resolved: That the report be noted.

19. Slough Youth Offending Team Update Report

The report covered the Team's reporting year, which ran from June 2017 – June 2018. The body was statutory (established in 2000) and had a range of partners and other boards (e.g. Youth Offending Team Management Board, Youth Justice Board) to manage the risks in its work. It had established its priorities and had three key indicators of performance; reoffending rates, rate of custody and number of first time entrants to the criminal justice system. It also developed relationships with young people's wider families to assist in its duties.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The reoffending rate currently stood at 32%; however, there was a considerable time lag in reporting on this given the to Youth Justice Board's formula and monitoring process used for the indicator on re-offending. Information regarding the current situation was monitored through risk panels and the compilation of safety plans.
- Preventative measures were put in place to assist with the avoidance of young people becoming first time offenders.
- SBC and SCST were in contact with other local authorities given the impact of its proximity to London on young offending. Risk Panel minutes were shared as appropriate to identify concerns and specific cases. In addition, the Thames Valley Youth Offenders Team Managers Network also assisted in these matters.
- The issues of gangs in Slough often involved older people using groups of youths rather than gangs operating in standard fashion. In addition, members of gangs could co-operate across lines of strict allegiance, suggesting that the picture was more complex than sometimes intimated.
- The Panel requested a breakdown of the types of crime involved in Slough beyond the top 3 categories identified in the report.

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- SBC's new offices would be designed in a manner which incorporated the need for private areas for confidential discussions.
- Members noted the stable and positive performance of the YOT over recent years.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

20. Youth Service and Vulnerable Children

SBC had taken the decision to close youth centres in 2014. Since this time, significant improvements had been made based on the themes and areas outlined in the report. The Youth Engagement Slough had taken over universal youth provision, working with 925 young people. It had worked to reduce the fear of crime and promote volunteering and healthy living. Overall, its priority was early prevention of issues. Targeted support was based on referrals to the service; whilst the report identified the initial reasons for referrals, greater examination showed deeper causes were often involved. Youth workers supported this; however, this was not a statutory power so relied on workers emphasising mutual interest to persuade young people to co-operate. Return Home Interviews would be conducted within 72 hours of the young person returning and would investigate the reasons for the absence; young people were often willing to share more information with youth workers than the Police.

Performance with children not in education, employment or training (NEETs) was very good in Slough. The use of the Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) programme to identify cases of concern at an early stage had proved very productive; in 2017 – 18, 205 cases had been identified and 185 had avoided becoming NEETs. The efficacy of tracking systems also meant that SBC had a very low number of cases where the destination was not known in comparison with other local authorities. The YOT worked with Looked After Children and care leavers to ensure their positions were as positive as possible.

The work with PSHE and Street Teams worked on preventing gang behaviour. The Home Office and other partners were engaged to understand the situation in Slough and work with local communities. Meanwhile, Youth Inspectors ensured that any public body could approach SBC for assistance and undertaking reviews of their services.

The Panel discussed the following matters in discussion:

- The CSE Team specialists were working intensively with young people and SCST to understand the local situation on grooming. The Exploitation Tool would also be used in this process. The process was also sensitive, as often the young person may be unaware of the abusive nature of the relationship involved. Ditton Park Academy had staged a production to raise awareness on the issue.
- The Youth Service did not cover issues such as child mortality, diabetes and the entry rates of epileptics to Accident and Emergency.

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Whilst this information was held by the service for information, they could not act on it. These questions were more suited to Public Health for more information.

- The rise in the number of incidents of missing people could be explained by the fact that these were incidents rather than the number of people involved. As a result, the same person could be responsible for multiple instances. The Joint Parenting Panel discussed these matters in detail on a confidential basis.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

21. Children's Centres Task and Finish Group - Terms of Reference

Resolved: That the terms of reference be noted.

22. Forward Work Programme

Resolved: That the work programme be noted.

23. Attendance Record

Resolved: That the attendance record be noted.

24. Date of Next Meeting - 6th December 2018

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.13 pm)