

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 12 JANUARY 2015**

**PRESENT:-** Councillors John Ballman, Mark Dempsey, Toby Elliott, Colin Lovell, Cindy Matthews, Kevin Parry, Maureen Penny, Stan Pajak, Vera Tomlinson, Steve Weisinger, Robert Wright (Chair) and Mary Friend

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors James Robbins and Mary Martin (Vice-Chair)

### **45. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Kevin Parry made a non-prejudicial declaration of interest in relation to the Committee's consideration of agenda item 5 Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session – Cabinet Member for Children's Services in his capacity as a Governor at the Great Western Hospital.

### **46. Public Question Time**

Mr Terry Reynolds asked questions regarding the connection between the closure of care homes and Council grant of £554,000 to Forward Swindon and how it would be allocated within Forward Swindon. The Chair responded to Mr Reynolds questions in part at the meeting and also agreed that a written response would be provided where necessary, as indicated at the meeting.

Mr Richard Symonds asked several questions relating to the scheduling of meetings, the budget allocated for the relocation of lamp posts within the Western Flyer scheme, flooding issues under Mead Way on the Western Flyer, the Council's policy on dog fouling and the responsibility for the enforcement of parking in restricted areas. The Chair asked for a written response to be provided to all the questions asked.

### **47. Minutes**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2014, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **48. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Children Services**

Councillor Fionuala Foley, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, was in attendance and presented a detailed report summarising progress and performance in respect of each of the following service areas within her portfolio of responsibility:

- Children and Family Services
- Education and Schools
- Children and Young People's Partnership Board and Children's Trust Board
- Early Years Development
- Fostering and Adoption Services

- Music Services
- Plas Pencelli Outdoor Education Centre
- Play Services
- Youth Offending Team
- Youth Services
- Troubled Families
- Governor Support Services

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Foley, in her presentation of the report, commented specifically on those elements within her portfolio which she felt had been most successful, those where a different approach might have produced better results and the lessons that might have been learned as a consequence, and the challenges she expected to be faced by the Council relation to these service areas in the coming year and beyond.

Following her presentation of the report, Councillor Foley, supported by her officer team, responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following topics:

- The action to be taken on the information gathered following the Domestic Violence Abuse Needs Assessment
- The difference in the number of trouble families being identified that meet the criteria for the Troubled Families Programme
- The reduction in teenage conception and unwanted teenage pregnancies
- The work of Plas Pencelli Outdoor Education Centre and its publicity and promotion to all schools in Swindon
- The criteria used for the Trouble Families Programme and the possibility of extending the criteria to capture more trouble families for Phase 2
- The timetable for the development of the recruitment and retention strategy workstream for social workers
- The number of agency supplied social workers and managers and their gender
- The programmes in place to minimise the use of agency staff
- The significant increase in the number of referrals to social care and whether it was a local or national issue
- The reasons why children are being referred to social care
- The ability to assess how the Council is at the forefront of best practice across the region in relation to the recruitment of social workers
- If there was a Strategy in place in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation
- The figures in relation to the first, second and third placements of children in care
- The Local Authority services bought in by Academies and comparisons with other Local Authorities
- The numbers of pupils of secondary school age who are educated away from school
- The timescale for the completion of Tadpole Farm Primary School
- The provision of education for children with autism
- The roll of the Council in raising the educational standards in schools that have transferred to academy status
- Identification of the reasons why self-harm takes place
- The reasons why some wards had higher conception rates in Swindon

- The need for an evaluation on the effect of the recent closure of Children's Centres
- The availability of respite care for the carers of young people

**Resolved:**

1. That Councillor Foley, and her support team of officers, be thanked for attending the meeting to present her performance report and for her full and open responses to members' questions and observations on the issues raised.
2. That information requested by members during the course of the Committee's consideration of this item be forwarded to members via the Committee Clerk.

#### **49. Localities and Community Capacity**

The Committee received a report from Councillor Richard Hurley, Cabinet Member for Communities and Volunteering, following a request by the Scrutiny Committee to review the policy which increased the focus of Localities to work alongside the Adults and Strengthening Families change programmes and help build and develop community support and volunteering.

The report outlined the Localities' broader community health, wellbeing and adult learning work which supported the development of the health and resilience of Swindon communities. It also provided an update on the Council's work in these areas, to allow the Committee to scrutinise the effectiveness of the approach and to review the specific outcomes that were being seen as a result of the investment.

Following his presentation of the report, Councillor Richard Hurley, supported by the Head of Localities, Community Involvement and Volunteering, responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following issues raised in the presentation and also in the accompanying report:

- The measures in place to determine the success of Localities work
- The age profiles, vetting process, time involvement of volunteers and summary of the work of Circles of Support
- The crossover of work of One Swindon and Localities in commissioning services and how to stop duplication
- The amount of officer time in linking volunteers to elderly people
- The underlying factors of people being lonely
- The long term future of Localities and the projects being put in place
- Supervision of volunteers
- The safety of people in the town centre at night and encouraging people to make use of town centre facilities

**Resolved:** That Councillor Hurley, and his officer support team, be thanked for attending the meeting to present the report and for their full and open responses to members' questions and observations on the issues raised.

## **50. Commissioning - Helping to Deliver Stronger Together**

The Committee received a report from Councillor David Renard, Leader of the Council providing a review of the progress made to ensure that the wider Council had a culture and understanding of commissioning in order to help deliver Stronger Together.

The report indicated that commissioning was a fundamental part of the Council's Stronger Together ambition and key route to achieve the Stronger together outcomes. Commissioning was also about making the best use of resources, both inside and outside of the Council including the resource in communities. The report also outlined in detail the following areas:

- Overview of Stronger Together
- Commissioning context
- Strategic commissioning
- The commissioning process
- The vision for commissioning in Swindon
- Commissioning principles
- Commissioning behaviours
- Implementation of the Vision of Behaviours
- The Commissioning Strategy
- Journey to Strategic Commissioning
- Next steps

Following his presentation of the report, Councillor David Renard, supported by the Board Director Commissioning, responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following issues raised in the presentation and also in the accompanying report:

- The concept of Commissioning was challenging to understand
- The resources available to commission services and where they would be allocated from
- Successful commissioning models in other Local Authorities
- The Commissioning Strategy and the objectives being achieved
- Examples of the enhanced role for members in commissioning

### **Resolved:**

1. That the Leader of the Council, and his officer support team, be thanked for attending the meeting to present the report and for their full and open responses to members' questions and observations on the issues raised.
2. That the Leader of the Council prepare a further report, for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee at their meeting in July 2015, on the outcomes expected from commissioning, a reminder of the activities already undertaken, the development of the Commissioning Strategy.