

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY
SELECT COMMITTEE
08/03/2018 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor Wrigglesworth (Chair)
Councillors Ahmad, Ali, Fielding and Phythian

Also in Attendance:

Jill Beaumont	Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC)
Ed Francis	Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Partnership, OMBC
Superintendent Daniel Inglis	Greater Manchester Police, Oldham Division
Merlin Joseph	Interim Director of Children's Services, OMBC
Jayne Stephenson	Director of Finance, Police and Crime, Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Mark Stenson	Head of Corporate Governance, OMBC
Fabiola Fuschi	Constitutional Services Officer, OMBC

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Bashforth, Harkness and Sheldon.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

5 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Value for Money Select Committee meetings held on 25th January 2018 and on 6th February 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

6 **MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD TO NOTE**

There were no minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings to note.

7 **POLICE PERFORMANCE AND THE EFFECTS OF FUNDING CUTS**

Consideration was given to a presentation of the Director of Finance, Police and Crime - Greater Manchester Combined

Authority, on the budget for the policing and crime function for Greater Manchester.



Oldham
Council

The report author attended the meeting with a representative of the Greater Manchester Police, Oldham division, to present the information and address the enquiries of the Select Committee.

It was reported that the Police Grant for 2018/19 (i.e.: £8.6 bn) remained the same amount as 2017/18. Therefore, no extra funding had been provided to cover demand on pay raises. A further increase in top slices from the Police Grant for nationally funded projects had been agreed (i.e.: £945m). In Greater Manchester, this meant that £55m had been top sliced from the Police Grant. Policing in Greater Manchester relied upon Government for 80% of their funding; 38% real term reduction in funding had occurred over the past seven years.

For what concerned the local context, it was reported that an increased and more complex demand for policing had been registered in Greater Manchester, especially between June and September 2017. The sharp increase in crime and the unchanged level of Police Grant explained the proposal to increase the Police precept on the Council Tax bill. This had been implemented with reluctance by local administrators who wanted to explain how the additional monetary resources would be used in Greater Manchester:

- Recruitment of a minimum of 100 additional police officers over the next two years with at least 50 additional police officers recruited in 2018/19;
- Investment in extra resources that would be able to respond to the challenges year on year increases in public protection incidents and the increasing complexity of investigations;
- Maintenance of Police Community Support Officers number;
- Investment in the digital forensic unit to ensure that evidence was gathered quickly and cases progressed, improving the service for victims of crime;
- Additional funding to support the policing of particularly serious incidents and crimes;
- The transformation of Greater Manchester Police through the Target Operating Model;
- A Mayoral Investment Fund – increasing the pace of improvements to how members of the public contacted the police including 101 line and reducing levels of sickness absence;
- The cost of additional 1% pay award.

Member sought and received clarification / commented on the following points:

- £55m re-distributed from local policing in Greater Manchester to national projects – It was explained that some of these resources would return to Greater Manchester in the form of Police Technology Programmes and Police Transformation Fund;

- Residents' complaints about the 101 system (Police non-emergency number) – It was explained that a project was in place to improve how the public contacted the Police. In addition to this, provisions had been made for digital crime reporting;
- Private Finance Initiative (PFI) buildings and reliance on their credit;
- Use of reserves and capital programme;
- Launch of Standing Together, partnership working and use of community safety grants.

RESOLVED that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they contain exempt information under paragraphs 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and it would not, on balance, be in the public interest to disclose the reports.

The Select Committee considered and asked questions on crime statistics and received information on crime reporting and partnership working.

RESOLVED that:

1. The information provided on the Mayoral Policing and Crime budget be noted;
2. A further update be provided in March 2019.

RESOLVED that, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be permitted during the consideration of the remaining agenda items.

8

UPDATE ON ADOPTION PERFORMANCE IN OLDHAM

The Select Committee gave consideration to a progress report of the Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help on the performance of the adoption service in relation to the adoption scorecard. The report also provided an update on national and local developments concerning adoption.

The author of the report attended the meeting to present the information and address the enquiries of the Select Committee.

The objectives of Oldham's Adoption Services were outlined. These aimed to ensure that adoption was the placement of choice for Looked After Children and that the process took place speedily and safely, with high quality support services for adoptive families.

It was explained that, in December 2017, the Department for Education (DfE) in England had reported that the number of Children Looked After continued to increase. However, the percentage of children who had ceased to be looked after through adoption was lower than previous years.

In Oldham, Looked After Children population continued to increase. The percentage of children who had ceased to be

looked after through adoption was lower than previous years. The data linked to the targets of the Adoption Scorecard year to date had fallen.



The targets set by the Department of Health for children who had a plan of adoption were outlined. These referred to the period of time that elapsed between a child entering care and moving with the adoptive family and the capacity of the local authority to match speedily and safely a child with the adoptive family.

It was explained that as the targets were measured over a three year rolling period, the service was not yet able to present full data for 2015 to 2018 until the end of the financial year. However, the data at the end of January 2018 for target A1 – average time between a child entering care and moving in with the adoptive family - showed improved performance.

With regards to target A2 – average time between a local authority receiving authority to place a child for adoption and the match to the adoptive family - Oldham's performance in the past three years had been below target. However, data to the end of January 2018, although below target, showed improved performance.

With regards to target A3 – children with a plan for adoption who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with the adoptive family, - Oldham had improved its performance.

The Adoption Scorecard also measured performance in relation to adopters. In Oldham, 62% of adopters waited three months or more from approval to being matched with a child. Year to date figures from January 2018 showed an improvement.

With regards to "hard to place" children (i.e.: sibling groups, 5 plus, children from black or minority ethnic backgrounds and disabled children), Oldham's position was in line with national trends. Adoption Now recruitment strategy focused on this children group when recruiting new prospective adopters.

It was also reported that Adoption Now, the new Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) had started operating in November 2017, bringing together the adoption services of six local authorities, including Oldham.

Members sought and received clarification / commented on the following points:

- Better performance and working ethos – It was explained that the ethos had not changed and social workers were dedicated to find the best possible match between a child and an adoptive family with a strong focus on hard to place children.
- Sharing best practice with other local authorities about hard to place children – It was explained that this was one of the main objectives of the RAA.

- Records of adoption breakdown – It was explained that this data was kept and it represented a low percentage. However, post adoption support services were in place. Matching children and adoptive families was considered critical.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the report be noted;
2. A progress report, including information on the new working structure, be presented in March 2019.

9

"GETTING TO GOOD" CHILDREN SOCIAL CARE YEARLY REPORT

Consideration was given to a progress report of the Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Partnership on the improvement journey Children's Services had undertaken since the Ofsted SIF (Single Inspection Framework) inspection of May-June 2017. As per request of the Select Committee, the report included the Getting to Good Plan, the local assessment protocol containing the required timescales for assessment.

The author of the report, accompanied by the Interim Director of Children's Services and the Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help attended the meeting to present the information and address the enquiries of the Select Committee.

The measures that had been put in place as part of the action plan were outlined. Amongst these, a focus on reducing caseload numbers and giving support to newly qualified social workers through Practice Learning Mentors, reducing the number of agency staff, improving quality of practice and recording, evidence of learning from quality assurance being embedded in practice.

As part of the action plan, a peer review and an annual conversation with Ofsted had taken place. An independently led review of Children's Services had also taken place in January 2018 in order to receive a view of how the authority has progressed on the improvement journey so far. The draft final report was in the process of being completed.

Members sought and received clarification / commented on the following points:

- Oldham's target for social workers' caseload and comparison to national data – It was explained that the service aspired to a target of 18 cases per social worker; newly qualified social workers would be allocated a maximum of 15 cases. This was in line with national parameters. There had been a significant increase in demand for services in Greater Manchester and nationally.
- Request to clarify the current issues with South Link - It was explained that the work space was very constrained as Children and Adults' Services teams were co-located. The car park was also an issue as well as the accessibility of meeting rooms. However, a plan was in place to address the

matter and a refurbishment of the building was scheduled to take place in June 2018.

- Review findings and children who were home educated or those attending licensed schools – It was explained that there were safeguarding measures in place to ensure that young people who were electively home educated, did receive satisfactory education.
- Getting to Good Action Plan and use of technology to communicate with young people – It was explained that 60 local authorities had adopted MOMO (Mind Of My Own) instant messaging application for smartphones and tablets. However, MOMO did not currently meet Oldham’s IT security requirements. Other measures were in place to ensure that children and young people’s voice was listened to (e.g.: independent review officers visited children before the review and review minutes were written as directed to the child and in a child friendly language, the independent review officer sent a letter to the child to introduce herself/himself before the review took place, etc.).
- Getting to Good Action Plan Objective 10 – Strengthening transition planning for children and young people with complex needs – It was explained that, although progress had been made on this action, transition issue was much wider and substantial work remained to be done. A dedicated worker (i.e.: Special Educational Needs and Disability Partner) – would take on issues regarding the transition process at an earlier stage. A written statement of actions had been completed to address this objective.
- Recruitment retention – It was explained that, as more resources had been invested in children’s services, more managers had been employed as well as social workers and higher grade social workers.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the report be noted;
2. A progress report be presented in six months.

10 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTERS TWO AND THREE**

RESOLVED that the Corporate Performance reports, quarters three and four, be noted.

11 **WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18**

RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2017/18 be noted.

As this was the last meeting for Councillor Joy Wrigglesworth, Councillor Ahmad, on behalf of all members of the Select Committee, thanked Councillor Wrigglesworth for her commitment and dedication in chairing the Select Committee since 2011.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.20 pm