

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 31 MARCH 2022**

Present: Councillor James (Chair);
Councillors Ballsdon, Carnell, Ennis, Hoskin, Mpofu-Coles, Pearce, Robinson, DP Singh, Sokale, Terry and White

Apologies: Councillors R Williams, David Absolom and O'Connell

30. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

31. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- Health and Wellbeing Board - 8 October 2021 and 21 January 2022.

32. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

A question on the following matter was submitted by Councillor White.

Question	Subject	Reply
Councillor White	Covid and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	Councillor Terry

(The full text of the question and reply was made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

33. BUILDING BERKSHIRE TOGETHER - ROYAL BERKSHIRE HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee received a verbal update from Alison Foster, Programme Director, Building Berkshire Together on the progress of the plans to redevelop the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

Alison explained that the programme for the redevelopment of the Royal Berkshire Hospital had begun in 2019. This was a three-step process to access resources for a new hospital from the HM Treasury and a strategic case for change had been submitted in 2020. This provided three preferred options, two to develop on the current site and one for off site development. Following this an outline business case for the options appraisal process and then a full business case for the procurement and contracting of the build would be submitted. The construction stage was expected to being during 2025 to 2030.

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However, costs for the current cohort were escalating and other cohorts had been paused so a review of costs could be undertaken during 2022. Consideration was being given to the impact of changes of working since the pandemic particularly around digitalisation. Also, a Green Plan had been developed for a zero net carbon impact by 2040 or earlier. It was noted that it was unlikely that the top-level investment requested would be provided and the review would consider efficiencies and alternative options for development.

It was reported that the estimated costs of the two options to redevelop the hospital onsite were £750 to £950m. Following a desktop exercise, the cost of the offsite development was estimated to be least £1.2bln. The pressures on funding would mean that the programme would consider a new wing at the current site. There were currently considerable issues onsite such as the pressures on the acute areas such as accident and emergency and a backlog of maintenance costs of £200m.

Recruitment for the Building Berkshire Together programme had taken place in July 2021 and work on the project with the local community would be undertaken over the next 5 years. A range of engagement events were taking place in person and online to help develop a model for co-production. The current funding bid to the Treasury had been submitted in May 2021 and a decision was expected during the Summer 2022.

It was suggested that people across councils and communities could come together to support and lobby the government for funding. It was noted that if the lower range of the preferred option for funding was provided this would meet and address issues onsite but less funding would impact services.

In response to a question regarding the offsite development outside Reading it was confirmed that three site options had been considered as a desktop exercise and transport links were considered as part of this exercise. However, clarity of the higher funding would be required before going ahead with this option and current services would need to be maintained.

Resolved - That Alison be thanked for her presentation.

34. AUTISM PARTNERSHIP BOARD - UPDATE

The Director of Adult Social Care and Health Services submitted a report updating the Committee on work being undertaken by the Autism Partnership Board with community partners to improve the lives of children and adults with autism in Reading.

The Assistant Director for Operations, Sunny Mehmi explained that the national Autism Strategy had first been written in 2009 and updated 2010 and 2014. The latest Autism Strategy was published in July 2021: 'The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021-2016'. The Reading Autism Partnership Board was launched in January 2019 to develop and implement the local Autism strategy and actions in response to the national Autism Strategy. The aim of the partnership was for statutory and voluntary partners, users, and carers to help develop a strategy for Reading. However, due to the Covid pandemic the work had been delayed. Since September 2021 the board

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had met monthly to fast track the work of the Strategy. The terms of reference and membership had been revised and a clear timeframe to develop the strategy had been established. The aim was for the draft Strategy to be submitted for consultation by June 2022 and following feedback and amendments the final draft and action plan would be presented to the Committee in September 2022.

The Autism Partnership Board had agreed that two task and finish groups would undertake projects on behalf of the Board. One would collect national and local datasets to identify an evidence-based needs assessment and help inform the priorities. The other would develop an Engagement Strategy to bring together views of children, adults, and their families to help shape and inform the new Strategy. Work was also being undertaken with charities to make sure that Autistic service users were represented on the Partnership Board. There was a clear timeframe to deliver the new Strategy and action plan over six months to a year.

It was suggested that once work with the task and finish groups had been completed that the Committee considered the terms of reference and findings from partner agencies and services users. It was noted that engagement work and the Strategy would cover all users and support would be provided to include and engage the input of different types of people with different types of autism.

The Strategy would be co-produced with the health community and the Partnership Board. It was noted that parents at the Avenue School were being consulted on the new Strategy. Work had been undertaken to develop the Strategy since January 2022 and it was confirmed that the draft would be available in June 2022. Work would also be undertaken to consider unmet needs of people yet to be diagnosed, those already diagnosed, and supporting families, to direct where resources could be reconfigured or diverted.

The Committee thanked Sunny for the report.

Resolved -

- (1) That the National Autism Strategy be noted;**
- (2) That the workplan for the Autism Partnership Board and progress in the development of the Reading Autism Strategy be noted.**

35. ADULT SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Adult Social Care and Health Services presented a report providing an overview of performance of Adult Social Care in Reading for 2020-21 against similar councils and an action plan to address two key areas of development.

The Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Quality, Performance and Practice, Jo Lappin provided a presentation on the report. The key areas were based on performance against the national Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) and measured against the

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Corporate Plan, services plans and directorate plans. It was noted that the objective was to support people in their own homes with help they need to retain independence.

The following main points were noted:

- It had been an unusual year during the pandemic and some plans had been changed in response to priorities.
- There had been an increase in the number of people who received reablement/rehabilitation services.
- There had been an increase in Safeguarding concern referrals from partner agencies.
- An increase in support for carers.
- 78% of people had been given support and signposted to other help in the community via the Advice and Wellbeing hub.
- Adult Social Care was measured nationally against short and long-term services. Also, via an annual Adult Social Care survey, Safeguarding Adults, Carers survey and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), which was a specific statutory responsibility.
- ASCOF measured four key areas: Enhancing quality of life for people with care and support needs; delaying and reducing the need for care and support; ensuring that people have a positive experience of care and support; safeguarding adults whose circumstances made them vulnerable and protecting them from avoidable harm.
- An area of focus was to only use residential or nursing homes when essential and to support people at home. This area was specifically focussed on younger people.
- There had been an increase in Direct Payments and this continued to be an area of priority.

The Committee thanked officers, carers, and front-line staff in Adult Social Care in supporting vulnerable adults in Reading.

Resolved -

- (1) That the performance of Adult Social Care in Reading for 2020-21 against similar Councils, the South East and the national Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) indicators, be noted.**
- (2) That the associated Action Plan to address two key areas of development be endorsed.**

36. BERKSHIRE WEST SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP ADULTS BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Adult Social Care and Health Services presented a report updating the Committee on the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board annual report for 2020/21. It was noted that Reading was the one of the partner agencies that contributed to the annual report with West Berkshire and Wokingham. The submission by Reading Borough Council was appended to the report.

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The Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Quality, Performance and Practice, Jo Lappin explained that it had been a challenging year for safeguarding services in Reading and nationally. Safeguarding services had been prioritised during the pandemic and there had been an increase in referrals.

The areas of focus for the coming year included reviewing the criteria for safeguarding referrals to support partners; the customer contact centre would become a single point of contact for adult services; supporting new legislation for Liberty, Protection and Safeguards; and continuing work with people who self-neglect.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

37. NEW DIRECTIONS

The Committee received a report from the Adult Learning and Skills Manager and Principal of New Directions College, Andrea Wood, providing an update on the work of college. The New Directions College was the Council's adult and community education service.

The report provided information on the work of the college and new initiatives including work undertaken with Reading UK CIC for the Government's Kickstart Scheme. Funding had also been secured to work with Ways into Work to deliver education and skills to support adults with special educational needs and disabilities.

Andrea requested to attend the Committee on an annual basis to provide an update on the service.

It was noted that the service had been delivered by Reading Borough Council since 1958 and had a significant impact on residents. Positive feedback showed that there were high satisfaction rates to the service with positive responses.

The Committee thanked Andrea for the update.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

38. GROWING UP IN READING

The Executive Director of Children's Services - Education, Early Help and Social Care, Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) submitted a report on the activity developed by BFfC, partners and the Council regarding the 'Growing Up in Reading' report.

Vicky Rhodes, Director of Early Help and Prevention, BFfC, presented the report and highlighted the main activities following the participation of over 700 young people in research carried out by a Youth Social Actions Team, supported by Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) and the University of Reading Participation Lab.

The key priorities identified were as follows:

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- Strengthening communication and publicity of the current youth offer; this would include promotion of the offer via a range of platforms to attract young people including the use of social media and an Instagram page.
- Identifying capacity/resource to co-ordinate and develop the youth offer; RBC Housing department had recruited a small team of youth workers to provide youth work in identified areas and support community groups to develop local youth clubs. Following confirmation of the extension of the Holiday Activity Fund from the Government providers for holiday activities for Easter 2022 had been completed. These would include specialist camps for children with special education needs and disabilities.
- Working together to secure further funding to develop Reading's youth offer with a focus on social inclusion and diversity. Following a series of focus groups, it was agreed that the clinical commissioning group would provide a larger response across Berkshire West. Discussions were being undertaken with RVA on the best was to allocate the £10k across local voluntary groups.

The next steps would include a bid for national Transformation Funding for Family Hubs. There were no timescales confirmed, however, work continued to be undertaken with local partners in preparation for the bid. The next round of Youth Investment Fund would offer the opportunity for youth support in Church, Norcot, Southcote and Whitley wards.

A range of opportunities for local people to have a voice in Reading included a No. 5 Young Ambassadors 'Restart Youth' report on mental health services. Also, the development of a broader young people's forum to bring together a range of existing groups to support engagement, particularly through the One Reading Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

It was reported that early discussions were taking place with young people and the voluntary and community sector on setting up a youth hub in Reading.

It was noted that mapping had highlighted gaps regarding activities for young people in different cultural communities. However, youth work with the voluntary sector was being undertaken to resource activities and enable accessibility for all groups.

It was suggested that the term BAME did not reflect the diverse cultures and communities in Reading. Also, discussions were taking place with BfC in supporting and meeting the needs of mixed heritage children in the community.

Resolved - That the responses progressed by Brighter Futures for Children in collaboration with Council and key partners to the 'Growing Up in Reading' report be noted.

39. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2021-2022

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The Executive Director of Children's Services - Education, Early Help and Social Care, BfFC, submitted a report on the main findings of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) for 2021/22. The annual report provided information for parents, childcare providers and Brighter Futures for Children on childcare needs, the local market and future school places demand.

The main findings included the following:

- There were no sufficiency issues in Reading relating to the childcare provision for 0- to 5-year-olds.
- Over 97% of providers were judged good or outstanding by Ofsted.
- There were a good range of childcare providers across all ages.
- The town centre and Whitley had been identified as areas for future growth.
- Information drawn from the providers and parents' surveys support planning for the forthcoming year.
- Future focus would be on childminders and retaining current childminders.
- Work would continue with parents and providers on the impact of COVID.
- Promotion would continue with the uptake of the funded places for 2-year-olds, this was currently at its highest level of 73%.
- As parents return to the workplace future sufficiency would be monitored due to the current low birth rate and changes in parents working patterns due to COVID.

It was noted that take up of the 30 free hours of childcare was important for children to progress. Concern was raised regarding the costs and finance required for maintained nurseries and that sufficient funding should be provided.

Resolved - That the Reading Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2021-22 be noted and endorsed.

Final Comment

(Members of the Committee thanked the Chair of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee, the Lead Councillor for Education and other members and officers for their contributions over the years.)

(The meeting closed at 8.07 pm)