

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on Friday, 15th March 2013 at 10.30am in Meeting Room 3, Darby House, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors D. White (Chair), V. Fletcher, M. Ion, A. McClements, S. Reynolds, C. Turley.

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllrs. P. Watling, C. Elliott, R. Picken; J. Bedesha, Cohesion Service Delivery Manager; F. Bottrill, Scrutiny Group Specialist; S. Jones, Scrutiny Officer. Cllr. E. Carter was also in attendance and was invited to take part in the meeting.

SMB-29 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Management Board held on the 18th January 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

SMB-30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. C. Mollett

SMB-31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

SMB-32 HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT

The Chair welcomed Cllr. Watling, Cabinet Member Children, Young People & Families to the meeting for the Holding the Executive to account session. The Cabinet member had been sent a list of standard questions in advance of the meeting.

The Chair asked Cllr. Watling what he felt were the biggest challenges for the service and Cllr. Watling highlighted the following points:

- The biggest challenge was the budget, as scrutiny was familiar with. The challenge was to protect vulnerable children when money was scarce and the restructure was key to this. The structure had been co-constructed with the teams and the leadership of Laura Johnston the Director for Children and Family services had been key. There were monthly Cabinet-led financial monitoring meetings with the Managing Director, Director and Assistant Directors. Scrutiny Chairs had been invited and three scrutiny

members had attended the last meeting which had been helpful to showing the way forward.

- Cllr. Watling said that children in care had in the past been used as a political football and he would not expect political groups to use children in care in this way in public session when all members are responsible as Corporate Parents. He had had conversations with shadow Cabinet members and opposition groups about this and the cross-party Corporate Parenting Group was starting to change the culture – he felt this was working and would continue to take the politics out of this area.
- The Building Schools for the Future programme was a big challenge and changes had been made to the original programme after listening to the public. He acknowledged that building would always create some issues for example with traffic.
- Cllr. Watling saw his role as being the voice of children and young people in the Cabinet and he felt he did this. He listens to what children and young people are saying and gave some examples of interactions with young people to hear their views and respond to them and to communicate to young people the role of the Council and Councillors to inspire them to get involved.

The Chair asked about the increasing number of children coming into care, whether there was pressure to over-react after the Climber case and what steps were in place to make sure the right support is provided at the right time. Cllr. Watling said it was clear there are many issues for the team. The Resource Allocation Management Panel (RAMP) had been set up as a cross-team panel to ensure families of children with complex needs or on the edge of care receive the right support to avoid admission and to ensure children in care return home safely as quickly as possible. This is a decision making panel and should see numbers drop although they needed to be careful that numbers do not drop too far and this had been made clear to the Director. Cllr. Watling had stood for election because he had been concerned the Council had put children and young people on the back burner without a Director of Children's Services and he was pleased this had changed. He believed the Council needed a corporate voice for children and young people and strategic direction and the Director looked at the whole corporate body and not just the children and young people services. He said that prevention was better than cure as which was the thrust of the Munro report and the aim was to keep children in safe families in safe communities. There was a pilot in Donnington where community champions had been recruited to look at the reasons why families do not engage with support organisations. This was being pushed forward with funding from the Children's Improvement Board of the Local Government Association (LGA). Services could not be imposed on people, they must evolve and be long standing. The government had made cuts to the Early Intervention grant but the Council had protected preventative services by providing money from universal services. There was a national focus on targeted support rather than universal services with the aim of preventing the need to take children into care. Cllr. Watling said that he argued the case with Cabinet colleagues and also challenges them on how cuts in other service

areas would affect children and young people.

Cllr. McClements agreed that prevention was better than cure but was concerned about the potential impact of the welfare benefit reforms on children and young people in families affected and wanted to know how Cllr. Watling linked into family prevention work. Cllr. Fletcher asked what links there were with schools to support children with special educational needs and Cllr. White asked how early intervention is mapped out with schools for example to identify children with aspergers or autism. Cllr. Watling replied that the effect of the welfare benefit reforms was not yet known but the service was set up to deal with issues. The prevention service supported children and young people from birth to age 19. Family Connect had been set up as an access or referral hub with a multi-agency triage team linked to multi-agency services, including the Police and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). He had initially needed to be convinced about the model but had been persuaded by a similar model which he had seen working in York. The multi-agency approach puts children and young people at the centre of work. He was keeping an eye on the model – there had been initial issues with the IT – but it was now moving ahead. Information sharing had been improved which enabled better decisions to be taken but it was early days and there may be hiccups. The Munro report in response to the Baby Peter case had highlighted the fact that agencies were not linked up or sharing information and the child had got lost in the middle - Family Connect would address this fundamental issue. The Children & Families Board had been reinstated and the members of the UK Youth Parliament attend meetings to represent young people. He felt that nationally there had been a loss of strategic focus on Every Child Matters in the thrust towards educational reform. Schools were important but it was more difficult to manage relationships with schools with the drive towards academies and free schools away from the local education authority and a Multi-Academy Trust had been set up to work with academies with a co-operative approach to traded services.

Cllr. Ion commented that a lot of work had clearly been done and the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee was about to report on its review of the Children in Placement Strategy, but he wanted to know more about what was being done to meet the challenge of future demand for primary school places. Cllr. Watling agreed this was a challenge particularly how to fund capital build in future and this was being discussed with planners. There was a good team in place. They had looked at the figures which had also been considered by the Scrutiny Management Board at the Call-in meeting about the planning of secondary school provision. At primary level there was an issue with the lack of places. There was not the same crisis in Telford & Wrekin as there was in London but there was still a need to deal with the projected growth in demand.

A member commented that that the Climber and Baby Peter cases could have made authorities more risk averse and resulted in more children being taken into care. He agreed with other members that links needed to be developed with schools so that issues could be identified and addressed early on and said that questions had been asked at Plans Board about how school places were linked to housing development. Cllr. Watling agreed this needed to be done but it could not be done alone and he felt that government policy needed to

reflect this and he would welcome the opportunity of working with opposition group members on lobbying nationally for investment.

Cllr. Fletcher raised an issue about the need for agencies to protect children and young people outside school premises for example from grooming or drugs and asked how this was being addressed. Cllr. Watling said he felt the national changes in education made the multi-agency approach much more difficult to implement with schools but there were some good examples of joint working in Telford and Wrekin and the Council was working hard to hold this together. There was a generally a good relationship between head teachers and services. Cllr. Fletcher asked whether the kind of problems she had highlighted were a community or a parental issue. Cllr. Watling said the Co-operative Youth Offer provided a clear strategy and model for developing youth services. The services had been affected by funding cuts but officers had worked to look at how resources could be used most effectively and there were three strands of work:

- Targeted support – this was aimed at young people with the highest need and community workers provide targeted support to families. A big issue was to help relative carers look after teens who could not go into foster care.
- Universal services
- Voluntary sector – more money had been put into grants for voluntary sector partners and different models of working had been looked at. Cabinet members had discussed other ways to support voluntary organisations such as reduced rent.

Altogether partnership working was coming back. There was a good Local Safeguarding Children Board which was independently chaired. Ofsted commented on its effectiveness but was concerned it was early on in its journey.

Cllr. Fletcher said that young people should also be educated so they know how to safeguard themselves. Cllr. Watling said that a group of children from Homer Lake school had done some work on bullying which had been presented at the Council and had received national recognition and was being shared across schools and academies. Telford & Wrekin wanted to work with all schools and academies but it was harder when education was becoming fragmented. There was a different relationship with schools not maintained by the Local Education Authority and a partnership approach had been taken but there was a dilemma for authorities who were still responsible for paying for some schools.

Cllr. McClements questioned the policy on CRB checks which had been required for volunteers to work on a bulb-planting project with a school in her ward. Cllr. Watling agreed that the checks needed to be done as quickly as possible but he had no concerns about requiring the checks. Those who want to abuse children can be clever and it was necessary to take all possible precautions including CRB checks. The Chair argued that CRB checks incurred an expense to the Council and that they did not necessarily show up potential abusers but Cllr. Watling said he totally disagreed and that he would not relax the model. Cllr. Ion agreed with Cllr. Watling and said that this was about managing risk but he also felt there should be an element of cost-benefit analysis – for example he had 9 separate CRB checks for different roles. Cllr.

Watling said this was a central government issue. The previous government had said that CRB checks should be transferrable but the problem was that agencies would not take the risk of accepting this. He also made the point that it was not just about doing Police checks but also about how we work with volunteers after that and the CRB wasn't a "green light".

Cllr. Ion asked about progress on the BSF programme and Cllr. Watling said he had a weekly briefing with the Director of Children's Services so that any potential slippage would be flagged up. BRJ was still on-track to open in 2015, Phoenix in September 2013 and Ercall Wood in 2014 with the others to follow. The framework for the contractor had compressed the work. Cllr. Ion asked about the risks around BSF, for example the timetable and the risks around capital receipts as the programme was predicated on achieving the sale of land at projected values. Cllr. Watling said the risks were low otherwise the government would not have approved the programme and there was a good relationship with Shepherds. Cllr. Ion asked whether the biggest capital receipt was in Charlton and Cllr. Watling said it was and this was part of a big reshaping of Wellington. Cllr. Ion pressed the question of whether the Cabinet member had concerns about the timetable and Cllr. Watling said he did not and that if there were any issues they would be flagged up at the weekly meetings. He said that BSF was one of the biggest challenges and believed that the programme delivered sustainable schools until 2018 which was the date set by DfE's for allowable building for projected need but it may be necessary to build on after that.

The Chair asked about the approach to saving money, generating income, traded services and shared services. Cllr. Watling said that the first question he asks about changes to services is how it would affect the children and that costs were not the starting point. Some brilliant services had had to be cut and these were hard decisions but the cuts had been made in a way that would have the least impact. With regard to shared services, the Joint Adoption Service with Shropshire was being reviewed but he assured members that there would be no negative impacts from any changes. With regard to traded services, the Co-operative offer was continuing to be developed. It was essential to be clear about what services the Council would provide because there was no point providing services that the schools would not buy and there was a need to find the right partners. Work was being done with the Secondary Heads and Principals group and the Schools Forum. It was difficult to say how the future would pan out. The commissioning process was being looked at to make this clear and transparent for local people to be involved, for example local people were involved in the Strengthening Families pilot in Donnington mentioned earlier. Work continued to identify external grant funding and to look at partnerships and opportunities for alternative ways of working such as mutuals. A review of children's centre services was underway looking at how to sustain the services not to close them. They were investing in services provided at the right time to build a sustainability culture and not a dependency culture in families.

The Chair asked about the cost and service for children with statements and said he had heard that Teaching Assistants were working with statemented children rather than qualified teachers so the benefit of the additional support

was lost. Cllr. Watling said that the Children & Families Bill making its way through Parliament included a different approach to children with special educational needs and would replace the special educational needs assessment with a health and wellbeing assessment so the right kind of support could be put in place. All services were under critical financial pressure and Cllr. Watling said it was clear that the Council should be at the centre of developing services. The Children & Families Board had been reinstated and this fitted into the Health & Wellbeing Board agendas so the voice of children and young people was heard.

Cllr. Fletcher asked how the Council was ensuring that the Pupil Premium was used for the intended purpose and Cllr. Watling said that he wished he could but that this was a matter for the schools and their governing bodies. Cllr. Fletcher then asked how school governors were being trained to do this. Cllr. Watling again said that this was legally the responsibility of the school governors and the head of Ofsted had recently been critical of governing bodies - it was important to have the right people on the governing bodies and he felt that in Telford & Wrekin there were some very good ones. He would welcome ideas from members on how to work on this in a fractured context. He said the Council has a well experienced School Improvement team and that the educational improvement curve in the borough had been huge. Cllr. Fletcher suggested that this could be featured in the Leader's newsletter and Cllr. Watling said this was a good idea.

Cllr. Turley asked whether the joint Adoption Service would remain with the Council or become part of Shropshire's outsourced company. Cllr. Watling said they would look at what was best for the children and young people. They were not looking at commissioning out at the moment but perhaps if partners could show this would work it could be looked at. A report would be brought to Cabinet in due course and this would be a decision for the whole Cabinet and not just him.

When there were no further questions the Chair thanked Cllr. Watling for attending and answering question. Cllr. Watling then left the meeting.

Before moving onto the next item Cllr. McClements congratulated Cllr. White on his appointment as Chair of the West Midlands Scrutiny Network. Cllr. White had been appointed for 12 months and Telford & Wrekin would host the next meeting of the network in July.

SMB-33 MANAGING CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AS PART OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer tabled a report identifying issues in the scrutiny work programmes which cut across more than one Scrutiny Committee. The report set out a proposed way of dealing with the issues which the Board was asked to consider. The main areas of overlap were with the welfare benefit reforms, the Cost Improvement Plan in children and young people, housing issues and First Point for Business which may duplicate Cabinet and officer time in attending scrutiny meetings. There was a discussion about this and the proposed

methods of dealing with the issues was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed ways of working set out in the report be agreed, namely:

Reports to the Budget and Finance Scrutiny Committee from:

**The Cabinet Member for Resources and Service Delivery report to the on the work of the Safeguarding Financial Monitoring Group
Director of Children and Family Services reports on the Early Help and Safeguarding Cost Improvement Plan**

During the budget consultation period this Committee can request any Cabinet Member or member of the Senior management team to attend.

Reports to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee from:

Assistant Directors and Cllr. Paul Watling on the Children in Care Performance Dashboard as a standing item (the Director of Children and Family Services to attend when appropriate.)

Assistant Directors and Cllr. Paul Watling on Impact of Early Intervention/ Family Connect (the Director of Children and Family Services to attend when appropriate.)

The Co-operative and Community Scrutiny Committee to lead on scrutiny of welfare reforms

The Housing Economy and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee to lead on scrutiny of housing

SMB-34 UPDATE ON POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER AND POLICE & CRIME PANELS

The item began with a short update from the Cohesion Manager. The last update to scrutiny had been in May 2012. Bill Longmore had been elected as the West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) in November. The West Mercia Police & Crime Plan had been developed and the Council had been consulted on the Plan. The Draft Plan and the Council's response to the Plan had been circulated as Appendix B1 and B2. A needs analysis of the Safer Communities Partnerships across West Mercia had been carried out prior to the election and as a result of this work, the priorities of the Telford & Wrekin Safer, Stronger Communities Partnership had been taken into account in the Draft Plan and this had been welcomed by the Council. Additionally, the PCC had agreed that the community safety grant previously allocated to the Council but which had passed to the PCC under the new arrangements would be allocated back to the Council which was welcome news. The Draft Plan proposed cuts to the police presence across West Mercia, but Telford & Wrekin had fared reasonably well with only one proposed closure which was the station in Newport. Options around Newport were being looked at and the

Council wanted to work with the PCC on a new location and were waiting for a reply to an invitation to the PCC to meet to discuss this. Overall the Draft Plan was considered favourable for Telford & Wrekin and this was attributed to the work that had gone into the preparation. The Plan highlighted the need for Community Safety Partnerships to be on board. The Plan was due to be confirmed at the end of March and would then be developed in more detail locally.

The Chair introduced Cllrs. Elliott and Picken who had been invited to the meeting as the Telford & Wrekin elected member representatives on the Police & Crime Panel (PCP) which was responsible for scrutinising the PCC and the Police & Crime Plan and holding the PCC to account. The Chair asked for their views on how they felt the PCP was working so far.

Cllr. Picken said he had only been to one meeting so far because he had only recently been appointed to the Panel and needed to develop his knowledge, but from what he had seen the PCC seemed to be listening to the Panel and the Chief Constable had also attended the meeting. Cllr. Elliott said he felt the PCP was a talking shop and that in reality the PCC did not need to listen to the Panel only to show that he had listened so there was no real accountability. He felt Telford & Wrekin had fared reasonably well in the Draft Plan because of the good work the Cohesion Manager had done before the election which had paved the way for the PCC's decisions but he felt that other authorities may see the PCP as a talking shop. This may change over time and there could be a role for the PCP if the PCC allowed the Panel to have more of a say but he doubted this would happen and did not think it would be useful.

The Chair asked about the make up of elected members on the PCP and whether places were proportional to the population. Home Office rules dictated that county, unitary and district authorities must all be represented on the PCP then the places had been allocated proportionate to population.

The Chair asked if the other members of the PCP became more effective whether this could potentially have a negative impact on Telford & Wrekin and the Cohesion Manager said this was possible.

There was a lengthy discussion about the proposed closure of Newport police station.

- Cllr. Carter had attended the meeting and was invited by the Chair to take part in the discussion. He congratulated the Cohesion Manager on his work and said he felt it was important for Telford & Wrekin to have a strong presence on the PCP because with these kinds of partnerships those with the loudest voice tended to do best. He felt that there was an opportunity to co-locate the police presence in Newport with the fire station. The fire station was efficiently run and in a good location and he had attended this meeting to put the case forward.
- The Chair thanked the Cohesion Manager for his good work but said that it was important to continue to press the case for a police presence in Newport.

- The Cohesion Manager thought it would depend on the nature of the service needed and the space required, for example whether it was necessary to have fully functioning police station or whether a front desk presence for members of the public would be sufficient and a discussion with the Bill Longmore was needed. Cllr. Carter said he would welcome the opportunity to look at the fire station with the Cohesion Manger and the Managing Director with a view to making a case for co-location at a round table meeting due to be held on the issue which Cllr. Hilda Rhodes as Cabinet member responsible for Community Protection was due to attend.
- Cllr. Elliott said that from his experience on the old Police Authority he had been in favour of the rationalisation of police stations. The cost per visit to a police station was astronomical and he thought that personal interaction with the police could be done in different ways, for example in libraries, as a better and more cost effective option. The issue was that the front desks were not being used and were expensive to run and the money would be better spent on front-line services. Not many people actually go to a police station nowadays. He did not have exact figures to hand, but a recent survey of usage of Wellington police station showed that only about 16 people had gone into the station in one week.
- The Chair said that Newport had a sizeable catchment area and felt a police presence was necessary and felt that support should be given to save it. Cllr. Picken thought it would be a good idea to bring all the emergency services together in one location as a base for vehicles and the Chair said that the West Midlands Ambulance Service had set up Make Ready hubs for their vehicles.
- Cllr. Ion agreed with Cllr. Elliott's point about costs but said there were a lot of politics and symbolism around this issue. He suggested that the type and volume of usage and the costs should be monitored over a period of time before making a decision. If it was found that very few people used the station, local people would need to be prepared before a change of service was made.
- Cllr. Cater said again that he felt a police presence in Newport was important.
- Cllr. Elliott said that the reality was that there was no money. The Wellington study showed the cost per visit to be around £50.
- Cllr. Ion said that there were 2 issues to consider: the deployment of police in Newport and the symbolic presence of the police to which he was sympathetic, but not at any cost.
- Cllr. Reynolds said that many stations were not fit for purpose now and they were just offices and did not really support the needs of the town. Only the main station at Malinslee had cells.
- Cllr. Carter repeated his support for a combined fire / ambulance / police

station on one site. Cllr. Ion said he may be in favour but on a “use it or lose it” basis.

Cllr. Fletcher asked whether the use of the non-emergency 101 number had been looked at. The Cohesion Manager said the 101 service was a national Home Office initiative and not within the remit of the PCC. He would need to check the powers of referral from the PCP to the Secretary of State.

Cllr. Ion referred to page 4 of the Council’s response to the Police & Crime Plan and asked who decided the deployment of the 5 Council funded Community Support Officers (CSOs). The Cohesion Manager said that the Council decides on deployment. Anti-Social Behaviour is monitored to identify hot spots so resources can be targeted and the CSOs are deployed to respond where needed. Parking and traffic can also be a problem and the CSOs can be deployed to enforce, ticket or try to make children safe on busy roads. He said Members could raise any specific issues with him to investigate.

Cllr. Fletcher asked how taxi marshalling would be funded. The Manager said it would be funded through a partnership bid and some funds had been found to put the scheme in place.

Cllr. Fletcher asked what would happen to the PCT funding for drug misuse from the end of March when the PCT is abolished and the Manager said the Health & Wellbeing Board would develop the Health & Wellbeing Strategy which would determine the commissioning strategy.

Cllr. Fletcher asked about the white ribbon campaign to raise awareness about domestic violence issues and how it was being achieved. The Manager said the administration was committed to promoting awareness of the issue. There was an awareness raising campaign and he would send details to Cllr. Fletcher. He confirmed that the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) were still happening. The Scrutiny Group Specialist reminded members that Domestic Violence would be coming to the May meeting for more detailed consideration.

Cllr. Fletcher asked whether the cost of the PCP came from the Council’s budget and it was confirmed that the costs came from the PCC budget.

The Scrutiny Group Specialist drew members’ attention to the Draft Protocol between West Mercia Police & Crime Panel and Crime & Disorder Overview and Scrutiny circulated as Appendix B3. PCPs were responsible for scrutiny of PCCs, and Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committees (in Telford & Wrekin the Scrutiny Management Board had this responsibility) were responsible for scrutinising crime and disorder functions carried out by Safer Communities Partnerships (in Telford & Wrekin the Safer Stronger Communities Partnership). Given the common aims of scrutinising the effectiveness of crime and disorder reduction measures, there was a need for the PCP and Scrutiny Committees to co-ordinate work to add value and avoid duplication. The draft protocol set out a proposed way for the West Mercia PCP and the Scrutiny Committees to work together and the idea was to have one common protocol. The Board was asked to delegate further work to agree the a

protocol with other Local Authority Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committees in West Mercia and the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel to the Statutory Scrutiny Officer in consultation with the Chair of Scrutiny Management Board and this was agreed. A further report would be brought to the Board in due course.

The Chair then referred members back to the issue of the police presence in Newport and moved that the Board support the views expressed by the Leader in his letter to the PCC and this was agreed.

Cllr. Picken said that the PCP should be non-political and Cllr. Elliott said he felt the first two meetings had been very political.

Cllr. McClements left the meeting after this item.

RESOLVED

- **That the Board support the views expressed by the Leader in his letter to the Police & Crime Commissioner regarding the police presence in Newport;**
- **That further work to agree the a protocol with other Local Authority Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committees in West Mercia and the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel be delegated to the Statutory Scrutiny Officer in consultation with the Chair of Scrutiny Management Board.**

SMB-35 UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRS

The Scrutiny Chairs provided an update on the work of the Scrutiny Committees since the last meeting.

- Cllr. Reynolds (Budget & Finance) reported that the Committee had worked intensively during January and February to scrutinise the budget proposals. The Committee had done a thorough job and had questioned most of the Cabinet members on their budget proposals. She had presented the Committee's response at Policy Review and to Cabinet on 28th February and the Cabinet member Resources & Service Delivery would be providing a written response. The Committee had taken a longer term view than in the past to look ahead at future years.
- Cllr. Turley (Housing, Economy & Infrastructure) had met the Cabinet member for Housing, Regeneration & Economic Development and Senior Officers on 14th March for a briefing on the Invest in Telford Cabinet report and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and a position note from the meeting was provided for the Committee. The last meeting on 28th February had been an informal update on the waste procurement process and a discussion about the work programme. The members had decided to defer scrutiny of the CIL on the basis of information received although the Chair would continue to receive regular Cabinet briefings. At the next meeting the Committee would have another update on the waste procurement and would scope work on housing issues.

- Cllr. Ion (Children & Young People) said that the Committee had spent the last 7 months on an in-depth review of the Children in Care Placement Strategy. A lot of evidence had been gathered including from social workers, foster carers and an Independent Reviewing Officer, the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and visits were planned to children in residential homes. A set of draft recommendations was shared and discussed at the last meeting. The review had found much to celebrate and many strengths but Ofsted had rated some of the safeguarding and looked after children service outcomes as Adequate or Inadequate and this was a matter of concern for the Committee. The Ofsted report on fostering services published this week had downgraded the service from Good to Adequate and the Committee would be looking at this.

The review had focussed on three lines of enquiry:

1. Whether systems and processes keep children safe and how the systems are Quality Assured – the Committee had found some mismatch between what should happen and what happens in practice
2. Value for Money – the Cost Improvement Plan and monthly financial monitoring meetings were welcomed but there were 144 providers on the regional residential framework contract and the committee felt if this could be reduced it would improve bargaining power. The average weekly cost of residential care was almost £3,000. The use of internal and external foster carers also needed to be rebalanced.
3. Responsibility for children placed by other authorities in Telford & Wrekin – there are 24 children’s homes with children placed by other authorities so there is no accountability to Telford & Wrekin. DI Philip Shakesheff (West Mercia force lead for missing persons) had attended scrutiny and talked about some good work the police had done with children’s home providers in Shropshire including a provider conference which had identified 40 children that the police had not previously known about.

The report and recommendations would be presented to Cabinet in May.

The next review would be of the provision of primary places to meet forecast demand, the need for expansion or new build and the difficulties with capital investment for building.

The Chair said he had not heard Kinship or Special Guardianship mentioned and he thought there was an issue with people being pressured to enter agreements and support then dropping off.

- Cllr. White (Health & Adult Care) reported that Telford & Wrekin had hosted the Regional Health Scrutiny Chairs’ meeting at the end of January. Attendance had been affected by the snow but there had been a good quality discussion. The Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee was continuing to look at the acute hospital trust especially A&E services which the Trust was struggling with – talks were continuing and plans would come forward mid-year. There were concerns about the way the Trust was working and the lack of focus on Telford and concerns about the Trust meeting the criteria for Foundation Trust status because of financial and quality issues. The Telford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has been

authorised without condition (pending one minor technicality) and he had met the chair of the CCG to develop the relationship and to discuss issues raised by scrutiny. The Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee had been focussing on Continuing Healthcare and had uncovered some eye opening stories. The next review of the Meals on Wheels service had been scoped and was getting underway.

There was no update from Cllr. McClements as she had left the meeting before this item.

SMB-36 SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The time and date of the next meeting at 10.30am on Friday 17th May was noted. Cllr. Shaun Davies would be attending for the Holding the Executive to Account session and the other item would be Domestic Violence.

The meeting ended at 12.30pm.

Chairman:

Date: